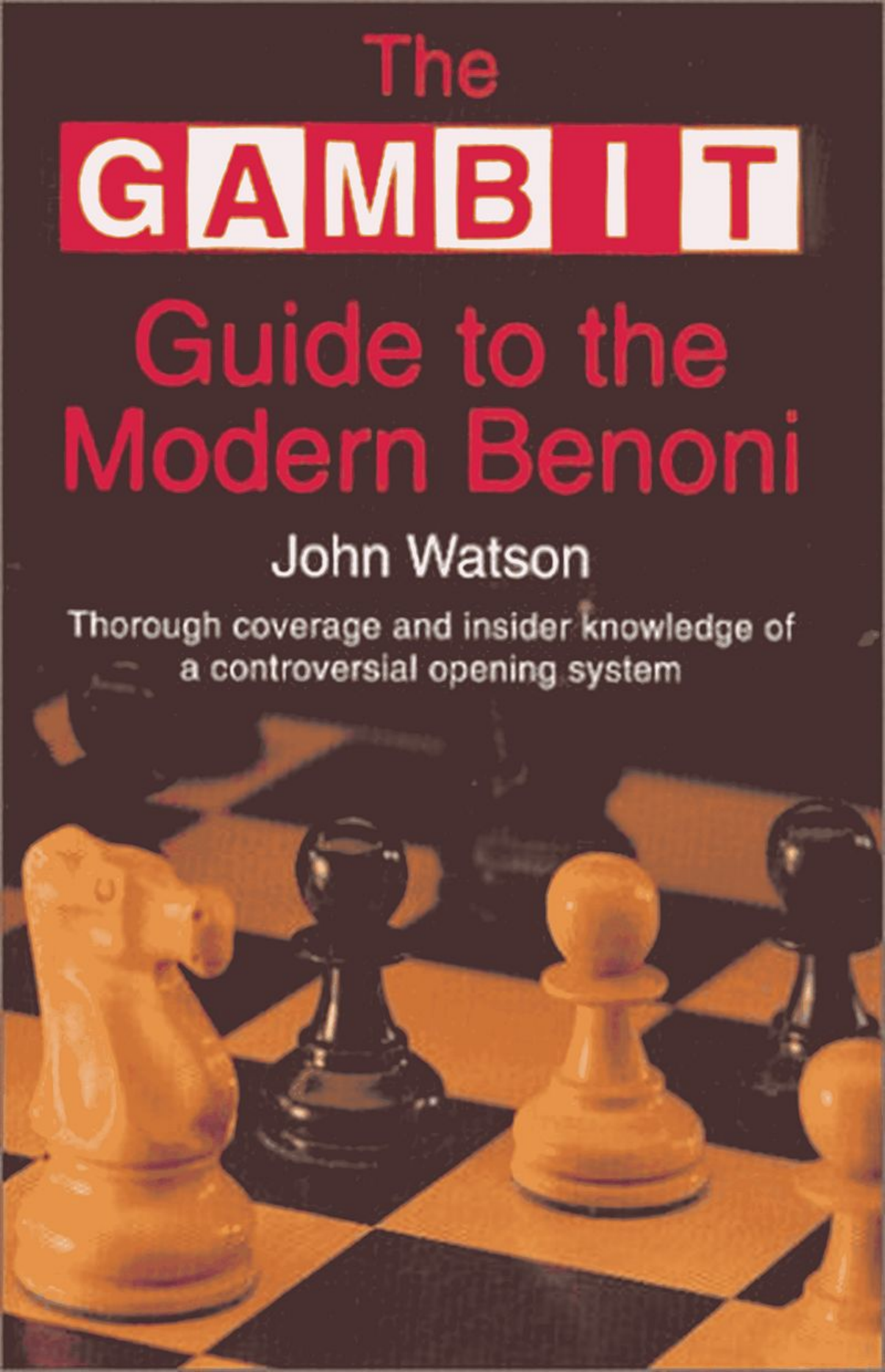
The GAMBIT Guide to the Modern Benoni

John Watson

Thorough coverage and insider knowledge of a controversial opening system



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John Watson

GAMBIT

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
+–	White is winning
±	White is much better
⩲	White is slightly better
=	equal position
∞	unclear position
⩱	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
–+	Black is winning
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
tt	team tournament
Wch	world championship
Ech	European championship
Wcht	World Team Championship
ECC	European Clubs Cup
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
Z	zonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
mem	memorial event
rpd	rapidplay game
corr.	correspondence game
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have helped me with this book, including Nick de Firmian, Mark Quinn, Ken Case and John Donaldson. I am particularly grateful to Graham Burgess for his numerous analytical corrections and suggestions.

Foreword

The project before you, like so many investigations in the chess world, has proven full of surprises. As often happens with authors, I have been struck by how theory, incredibly deep in some lines, is superficial or just wrong in many areas. We tend to assume that everything is more or less worked out in established openings, but that is perhaps a confusion between the great mass of games, which often don't signify much, and the best moves. It turns out that much of the Modern Benoni is still unexplored territory.

This is a repertoire book for Black, which means that instead of trying to cover the opening as a whole, Black is provided a set of suggested lines. The drawback to such a book is its lack of comprehensiveness; its advantages are in attention to detail and in the discipline it imposes upon the author. That is, the author is responsible for specific lines of play, and to the extent that it is practical, should not ignore any reasonable move by White, whether or not it has been played or discussed.

My method has been to offer the reader a first, second and occasionally third system against the most critical and popular variations. Thus if one line fails due to a theoretical development, or if it doesn't appeal to you, there's another option or two to look into. The majority of older or lesser variations are dealt with in the same fashion, although there are some exceptions. In most cases, the first suggested repertoire system is a more established strategy, whereas the second repertoire system tends (with very important exceptions) to be somewhat lesser known, less theoretical, and in many cases, more fun. I have also analysed or simply mentioned further options for Black in the notes to these proposed systems.

Given the limitations of space, my preference has been to forego chapter introductions that include diagrams of characteristic positions and schemes. I feel that prose explanations in opening books should be linked to the examples and analysis, and have therefore incorporated most of my general rules, tips, and advice within the analysis and not in isolation. Regarding the structure of the presentation, one will note that the majority of lines end rather pleasantly for Black, reflecting my own advocacy. But that is an aesthetic choice of layout and by no means indicative of a final assessment. From the analysis, it should be very clear at which points both sides could have pursued their most promising strategies. Thus the notes are vitally important, and I will always try to draw the reader's

attention to the critical junctures. In that context, if I think that a particular unplayed or underestimated line is White's best chance, I will devote extra analysis to that option, which accounts for some notes being more complex than the main line itself. In no case will I recommend a system that, played correctly, gives White a large, unambiguous advantage, however appealing that system may be for Black in practical play. Sometimes I give a brief analysis to indicate why I have not used the theoretically preferred line for Black. Finally, for better readability, I have mostly reserved the use of diagrams for intelligibility (e.g., before complicated branches), rather than for novelties or stunning moves.

Inevitably, I used computer engines (mostly *Fritz 6*, *Nimzo 7.32*, and *Hiarcs 7.32*) to catch blunders (numerous in my case!), monitor positions, and suggest moves, roles which they fulfilled admirably. From previous experience, I knew that when a truly subtle move or one requiring a long-term view was required, the engines were seldom up to the task, even when given overnight to look, and/or when they were allowed to look for a second- or third-best move. So I spent a great deal of time with a physical board, pen, and notebook in hand, especially when writing a chapter for the first time. My most original ideas of significance, such as they are, arose from that environment. One must be careful to ignore many of those '±'s and '∓'s that the engines generate, not a few of which will be overturned in short order if you just trust your judgement and play some moves for the purportedly inferior side. On the other hand, by allowing these inhuman assistants to help, I have certainly been able to include more original analysis in this book than in any other I have written. As always, if a note has no attribution, it comes from me, except for rare cases of a few painfully obvious moves. I have also not been at all shy about citing game fragments by weak or unknown players if they involve a continuation the reader may reasonably want to know about. It is perfectly simple to interrupt the example with a suggested improvement, just as with higher-level games. Limiting oneself to the latter is not only snobbish but also a guarantee of decreased quality.

My attitude is biased towards Black, however objective I strive to be; and as time goes on, readers and theoreticians will doubtless find that some of my assessments are too optimistic for Black (as well as for White, but probably in fewer cases). I have not 'hidden' any adverse assessments, and have reluctantly weeded out attractive options that didn't pan out. Even when I have some reservations about a suggested line on the basis of general impression, I have tried to go by the verdict of my analysis rather than my intuition. Nevertheless, I would be surprised if every one of my more ambitious and experimental second lines survives scrutiny in the long run. I do believe that most of them will.

What is the theoretical status of the Benoni? Without question, the two systems that most threaten the viability of this opening are to be found in Chapter 9 (the 'Modern Main Line') and in Line A3 of Chapter 5 (the 'Taimanov Attack').

For the last 15 years, players of Black have struggled to find answers to the difficulties posed by those set-ups. I have attempted to present specific and detailed solutions to both and I leave it to the reader to judge whether I have succeeded. Serious challenges are also posed by some of the ♗f4 systems in Chapter 2, the ♗d3 and ♘ge2 strategies of Chapter 6, and in a more positional sense, by the Classical variation of Chapter 10; but in the end, Black seems well able to cope with those approaches. The Benoni resembles other ambitious defences, in that one strives for rich counterplay and tries, at least to some extent, to render the question of theoretical equality moot. At the end of many variations, an author simply has to live with a dynamic imbalance that defies proper assessment.

The Benoni was my first defence, inspired by the play of the great Mikhail Tal. Other world champions such as Spassky and Fischer used the Benoni only sporadically, but the early Kasparov had it as his main weapon. The best-known contemporary Benoni players and theoreticians are probably Psakhis, Kapengut, Nunn, Suba and Topalov. A selective list of other players who have strongly contributed to its theory would include Suetin, Velimirović, de Firmian, D.Gurevich, Sax, Ljubojević, Matulović, Pigusov, Lobron, Magerramov, Marin, Shabalov, Kindermann, Y.Grünfeld, A.Schneider, Yudasin, Spraggett, Wahls, Wedberg and Emms. My apologies to the other deserving names I have left off this list.

Enjoy this book, and have fun with your Benoni adventures!

John Watson

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1 Introduction and Early Moves

The Benoni is first and foremost an active defence. Opening books often claim that the opening they advocate is 'for the attacking player', 'adventurous', 'not for the faint-hearted', and the like. But the Modern Benoni, correctly played, truly fits such characterizations. There is no 'Symmetrical Benoni', no system that could be fully described as 'The Positional Line', and only the rarest instance of an early exchange of queens. Probably no other respectable opening requires as many pawn and exchange sacrifices to achieve a good game, and proper Benoni play includes the most extreme examples of competing attacks and counterattacks.

John Nunn, describing the Benoni, says "Black relies fairly heavily on tactical resources to vindicate his opening play. Usually there will come a moment when Black will have to continue tactically to justify his play, for otherwise his pieces will be pushed back from their active squares and he will be reduced to permanent passivity." The remarkable thing is that such tactical resources persistently appear for Black, as first shown by Mikhail Tal, the hero of Benoni players everywhere.

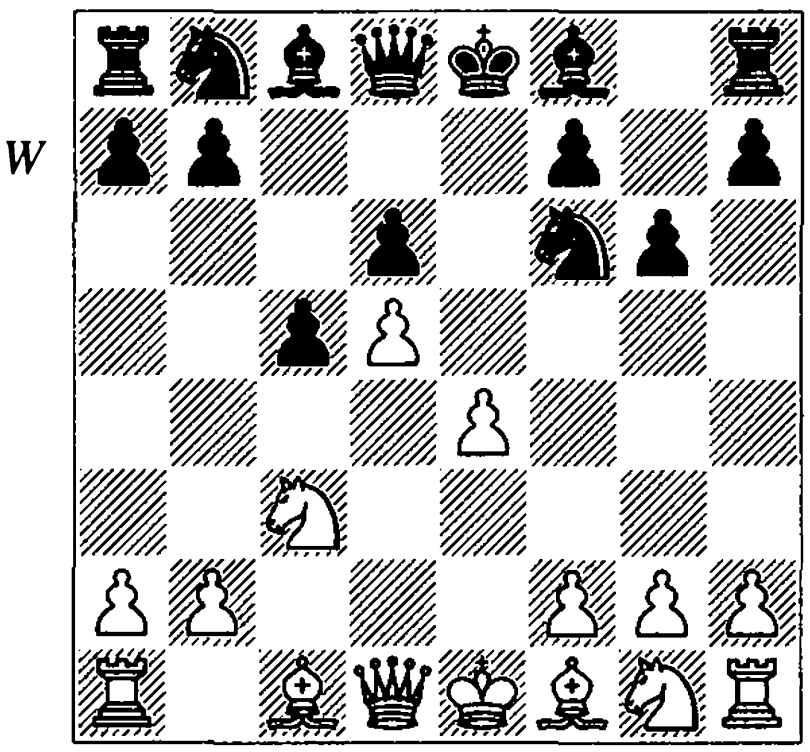
Despite the considerable number of international masters and grandmasters who use it, the Modern Benoni is still considered marginal by many contemporary players. To the extent that their scepticism is founded upon general considerations, I think they might argue that White controls more space, and that if White can suppress Black's principal freeing moves (...b5, and sometimes ...f5), he will have plenty of time to organize an attack of his own. The philosophy behind the latter point is that possession of greater space allows one to transfer pieces to the attack more quickly than the opponent can. In certain Benoni positions, White also has the two bishops to assist him (usually after an exchange of bishop for knight involving ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3 or ...b6, ...♗a6 and ...♗xc4).

Modern practice provides a number of counterexamples to this way of thinking. Numerous black defences compensate for a lack of space by the dynamic elasticity of their pawn-structures. A leading example is the Open Sicilian Defence, in which White controls more space (generally four ranks to three), especially in the ...e6 variations such as the Scheveningen and many lines of the Najdorf, but also

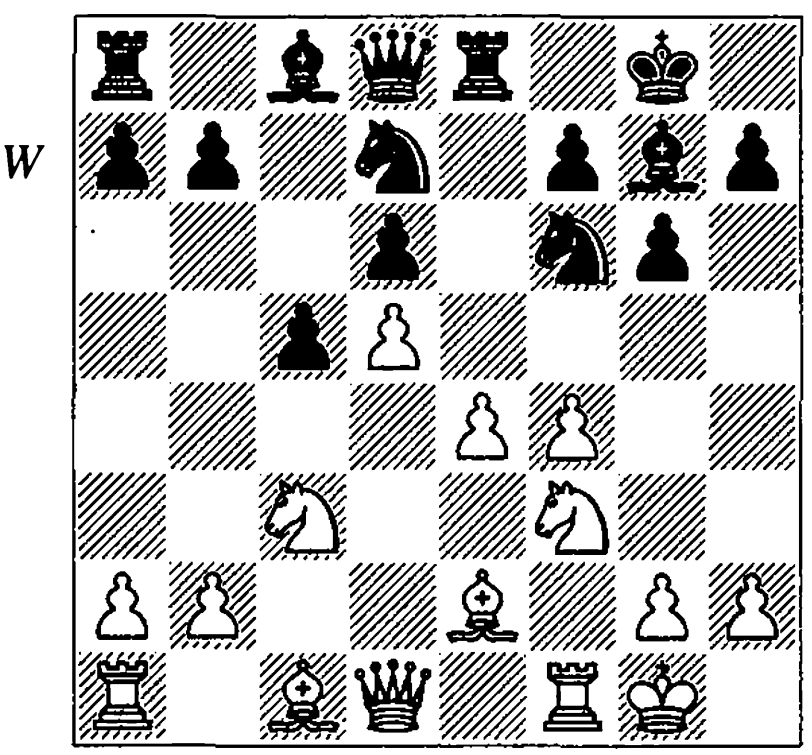
in variations such as the Maroczy Bind, Paulsen/Kan, etc. Black's freeing moves such as ...b5 and ...d5 can sometimes be suppressed, but structural considerations and the latent activity of Black's pieces ensure a balance. Similar concepts are expressed in defences as varied as the King's Indian, Modern, French, Nimzo-Indian and others. In many Benoni positions, even if White manages to avoid the kind of tactical resource mentioned above, his control of more space by no means guarantees that he can improve his position. If White undertakes further space-gaining moves such as g4, a5, or b4, they often prove to be weakening and backfire. In the meantime, Black's possibility of breaking down the centre and his threatened expansion on the queenside are difficult to suppress indefinitely. Moreover, many Benoni endgames are equal or even favourable to Black, given his compact pawn-structure. So there is a certain onus on White to act in the middlegame if he is to achieve anything.

It would be impossible to illustrate even a fraction of typical positions and tactics that arise from the Benoni. My object has been to discuss these when they arise in concrete positions throughout the book. Nevertheless, let me comment upon just a few prototypical structures and strategic themes for those who are new to this opening.

The most fundamental strategy for White when he has the kind of structure featured in the following diagram is to enforce the advance e4-e5,

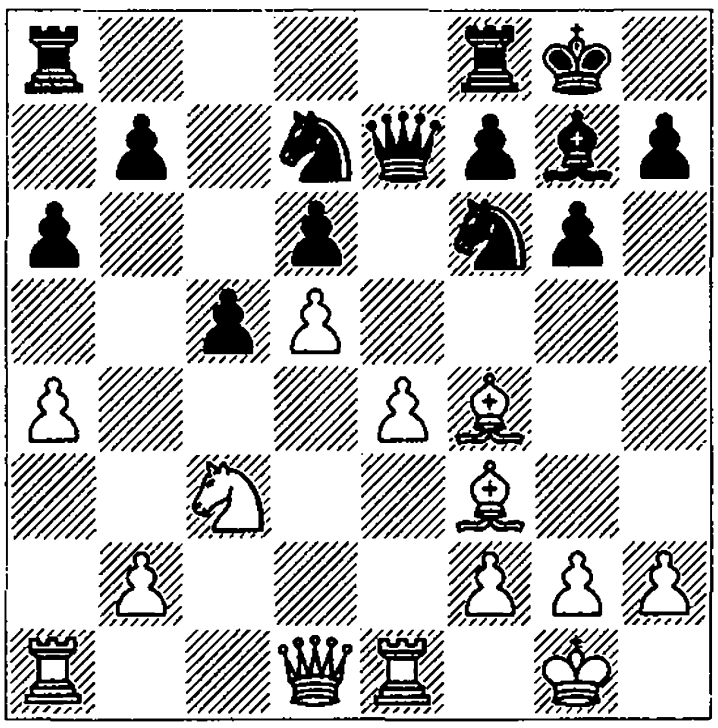


undermining the heart of Black's position, his pawn on d6. A successful e5 can both restrict the opponent's forces and open up lines for White's pieces. Black's normal counter-strategy is to restrain the advance of the e-pawn by, for example, ...♘bd7, ...♖e8, ...♕c7, etc. Only when that is achieved can he safely undertake operations elsewhere. Here are two typical examples:



A position from Chapter 5. White employs his f-pawn and knight to enforce e5; Black uses his d-pawn, rook and knight to prevent it.

W



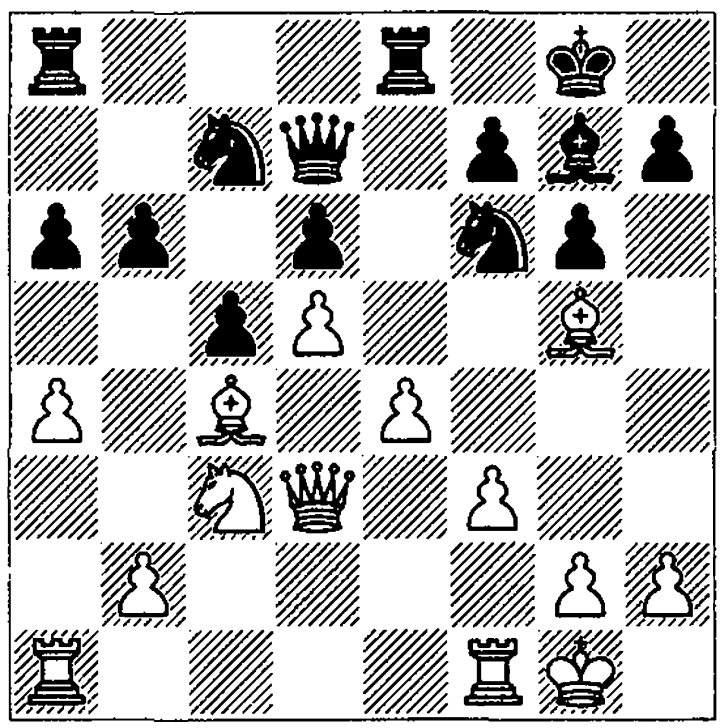
From Chapter 9. Here White keeps his f-pawn back, but tries to support the e5 advance with his bishop on f4 and his rook on e1. Two other aspects of this position are worth noting:

a) The presence of the queen on e7, which makes Black vulnerable to the tempo-winning d6 if he should respond to e5 by ...dxe5.

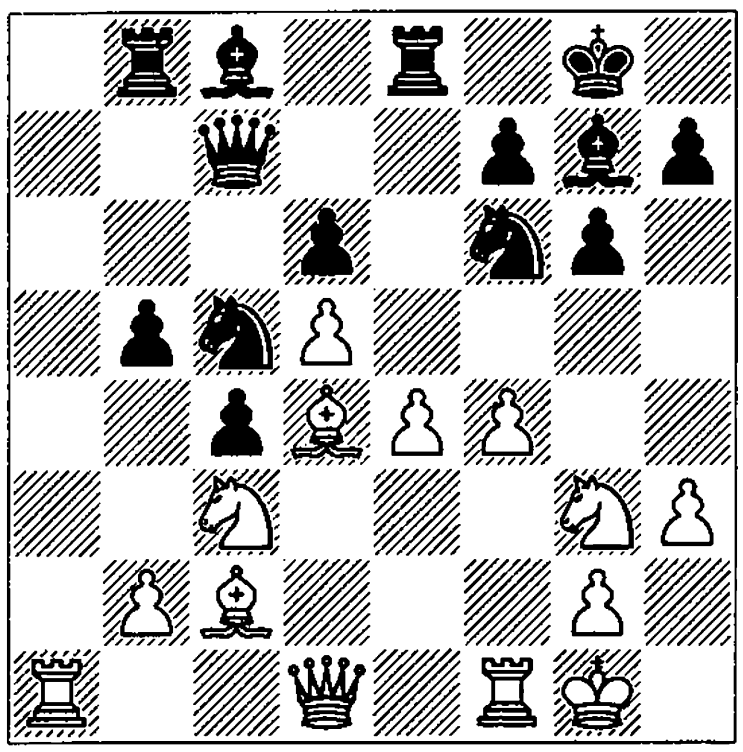
b) Black has played ...♗g4 and exchanged the bishop for a white knight on f3. This removes a piece which would normally support the e5 advance, while conceding the two bishops. One could argue, however, that knights are the equal of bishops in positions characterized by mutual restraint.

One of Black's standard plans in most variations is to activate his queenside majority by ...b5. This can be followed by moves like ...c4, ...b4 and ...c3, which will drive back White's pieces and sometimes extend the influence of the g7-bishop. The combination of ...c4 and ...♘c5 can exert pressure on important central squares such as e4 and d3. White, anticipating the difficulties that might arise, would like to restrain ...b5 by a4, counting upon his knight on c3 and sometimes a bishop on e2 or d3 to help out in this task. In fact, one example of this is the last diagram, in which ...b5 is held back by the pawn on a4 and knight on c3. Black may add support to the ...b5 thrust by moves such as ...♖ab8 and ...♘e8-c7, whereas White may play moves like ♗e2 and/or ♕b3 in an attempt to prevent it.

B



This is an example from Chapter 10. White is doing his best to hold down ...b5 with a pawn, knight, bishop and queen. If Black is equally stubborn, he might continue by ...♕c8, ...♖ab8, and ...♕b7, just to enforce ...b5. Of course, both sides have other things to do as well. By the way, this position arose after Black played ...b6 and ...♗a6, after which the bishop on a6 took a knight on c4. See below for a discussion of both the ♘f3-d2-c4 manoeuvre and Black's desire to exchange his light-squared bishop for that knight.

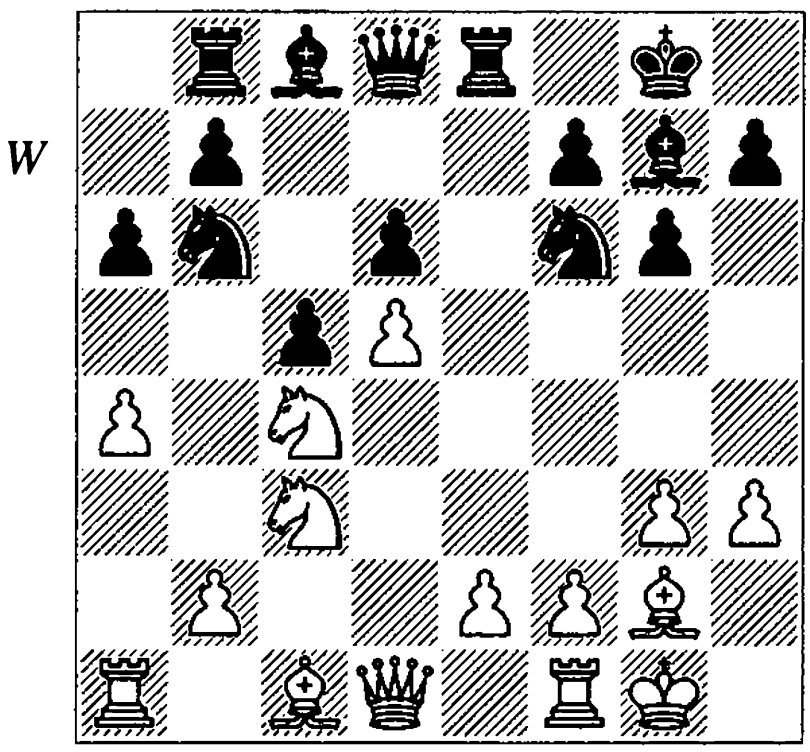


The e5 versus ...b5 struggle frequently leads to a violent clash of forces. In this position from Chapter 7, White is about to tear Black apart with e5, but ...b4 is also coming, to drive White's pieces back away from the centre and initiate a counterattack. Another idea here is that e5 can be met by ...dxe5 and then an exchange sacrifice on e5 (i.e., ...♖xe5), after which Black's pieces become extremely active and he controls the dark squares.

There are other standard ideas associated with these e5 and ...b5 themes. One of these arises when White simply allows ...b5, but then stops the advance of the queenside majority by ♖b1 and b4. A major idea in that case is that the move ...c4 concedes to White the use of d4 for his pieces, whereas Black's knight is denied access to c5. On the other hand, a move like ...cxb4 in response to b4 will often help Black to overrun the queenside. In another scenario, White can wait for ...b5 and then play a4, in order to respond to ...b4 by ♘b1 or ♘d1. His idea is to occupy c4, but the waste of time involved can make White vulnerable to central tactics. Regarding White's e5 break, Black need not always prevent it directly by massing his forces against that square, but will frequently take prophylactic measures to ensure that e5 exposes White's d-pawn. Thus, a queen or rook on d8 with knights on f6 and/or c7 can ensure that White's e5 advance loses the d-pawn. Even if d5 is sufficiently protected after e5, the response ...dxe5 will often allow an attack on the now vulnerable d-pawn by, say, ...♗b7 and ...♖ad8.

A manoeuvre characteristic of every system except those of Chapters 7 and 8 is ♘f3-d2-c4 for White. One might think that this is too time-consuming, especially since the knight on f3 is already watching over d4 and e5. But there are several reasons for this sojourn. For one thing, the d6-square is attacked, and ♗f4 will attack it a second time, so Black must keep two of his own pieces ready for defence of that square. This means that standard moves such as ...♘bd7, ...♘fd7, and ...♗d7 are sometimes unplayable, because they cut off the queen's protection of d6. The c4-knight can also be very strong in conjunction with f4 and e5, not least because it supports a timely d6 after ...dxe5.

A knight on c4 tends to be so effective that if Black cannot drive it away by ...b5, he will usually try to exchange it. In this example from Chapter 6 (*see diagram on following page*), he has just challenged the c4-knight by 13...♘b6, yet after 14 ♘a3, Black seems to have wasted time, since a5



will expel Black's knight and then ♘c4 follows anyway. Nevertheless, Black can respond by 14...♗d7 15 a5 ♘c8 16 ♘c4 ♗b5, once again intending to trade off the knight, which has no particularly good place to go. As mentioned earlier, a similar bishop-for-knight trade on c4 can arise after ...b6 and ...♗a6, or Black can act prophylactically, by an early ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3, to stop the f3-knight from even starting out on its journey.

This idea of exchanging off Black's c8-bishop recurs throughout the Benoni. Superficially, one might think that this is his 'good' bishop (unrestricted by his centre pawns). But in fact, the c8-bishop frequently has nowhere useful to go, since white pawns on d5 and e4 prevent ...♗e6 or ...♗f5, whereas g4 is often covered by a bishop on e2 or a pawn on f3 or h3. On the queenside, this same bishop can look silly on b7 'attacking' the super-solid pawn on d5 (an exception occurs when White succeeds in playing e5 and his d-pawn becomes weak). At any rate, Black should be aware that his light-squared bishop is a problem piece. White's own light-squared bishop can be similarly difficult to post effectively, but for the traditional reason that his centre pawns tend to be on light squares.

There are many other themes and trade-offs that one will encounter repeatedly throughout this book; for example:

a) the effects of Black's freeing move ...f5;

b) the consequences of expansion by ...c4 without ...b5;

c) the conditions for pawn sacrifices involving e5 or ...b5;

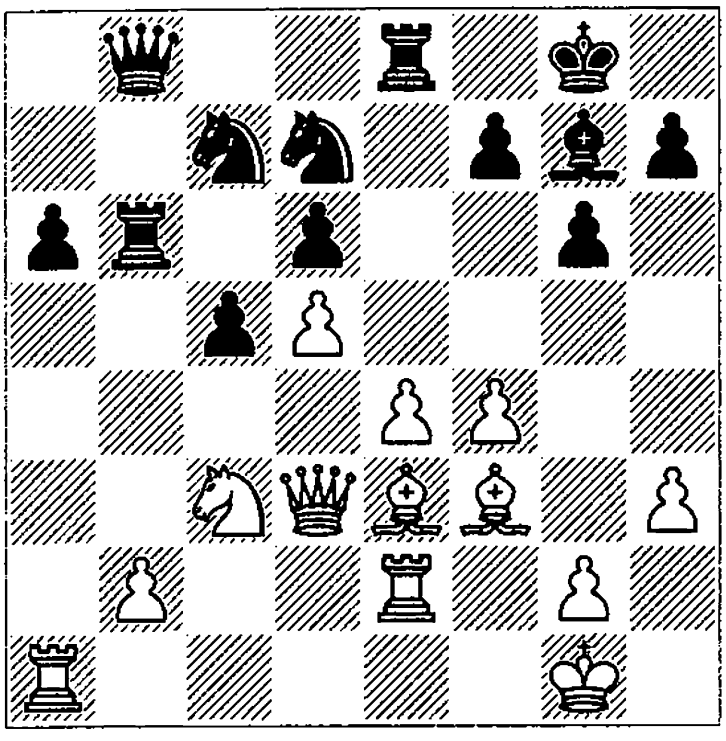
d) the weakening of Black's kingside by ...h6 and ...g5 to win the two bishops;

e) White's attack by f4-f5;

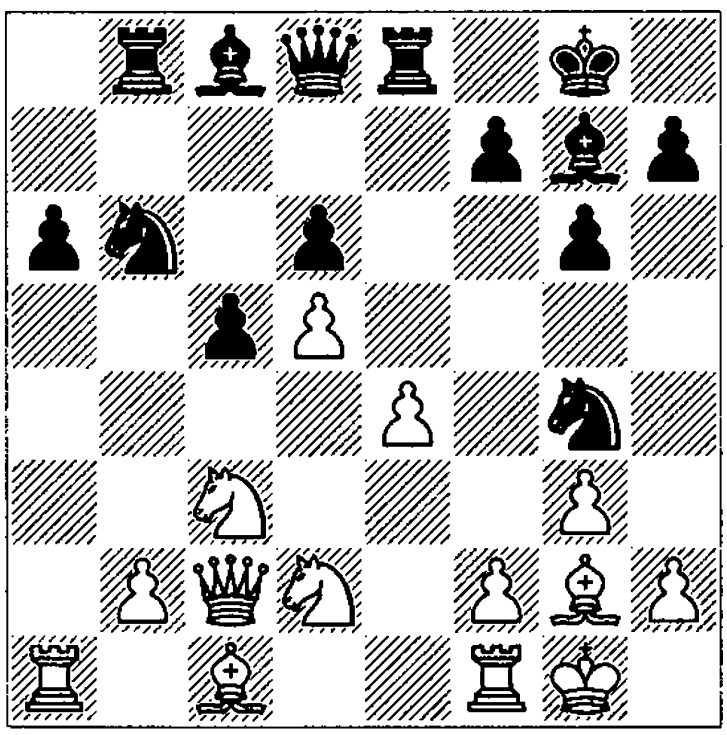
f) White's attempted expansion by g4; and

g) the special problems introduced by the move ♗g5.

These will be examined in context. One last issue, however, deserves discussion at this point, since it arises in nearly every Benoni variation, and may well confuse those new to the opening. Returning to the queenside struggle, White will often play a5 in response to ...a6, so that he can capture *en passant* should Black play ...b5. Black can prevent this by playing ...b6, then ...a6, and finally ...b5, but that is rather slow. So he usually prefers to play ...b5 directly and allow White's capture on b6. Then we have a situation in which Black has the b-file with a target on b2, whereas White has the a-file with a target on a6. Here are two of literally hundreds of such positions:



From Chapter 5. Black's pressure down the b-file counteracts White's space and bishops. After White defends the b-pawn, Black has moves like ...♖b3 and ...♘b5-d4 to try to keep the initiative.



A knight on b6 doesn't exert direct pressure as the rook did in the last diagram, but it can still be effective. In this position from Chapter 6, White might be worried about ...f5 and opt for h3, but after ...♘e5, Black is ready for ...♘bc4. White's attempt to prevent this by b3 would be well met by ...c4!, threatening infiltration on d3.

These last two positions are fairly level, but I'll go out on a limb and state that in a majority of cases, Black gets more out of the b-file than White does from the a-file. This is partly because the queenside is his natural sphere of activity, and partly because the b4- and b5-squares are so helpful in activating his pieces. Thus Black normally shouldn't fear a5, and in fact, he sometimes provokes it. Of course, there are exceptions; e.g., when White restricts Black's game with a knight or bishop on a5, or when the a-pawn is particularly weak. Also, a position of mutual zugzwang on the queenside generally favours White, who gains a freer hand on the rest of the board. Fortunately for Black, that kind of stasis is relatively infrequent.

I hope that these general characterizations will help you orientate yourself as you delve into the particulars of this book. That said, let's move on to the obligatory task of examining some early deviations and questions of move-order.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6

The first move of the Modern Benoni. One might argue that the Benoni proper doesn't begin until after 4...exd5 5 cxd5 d6 (or even after 6...g6). But on the way there White has a few early alternatives, some designed to transpose at his discretion. The theoretically most important of these is certainly 4 ♘f3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 (Line C1), in which White either foregoes or delays ♘c3. Fortunately, although they can

hardly be disadvantageous, the other deviations tend to be passive and shouldn't overly worry Black:

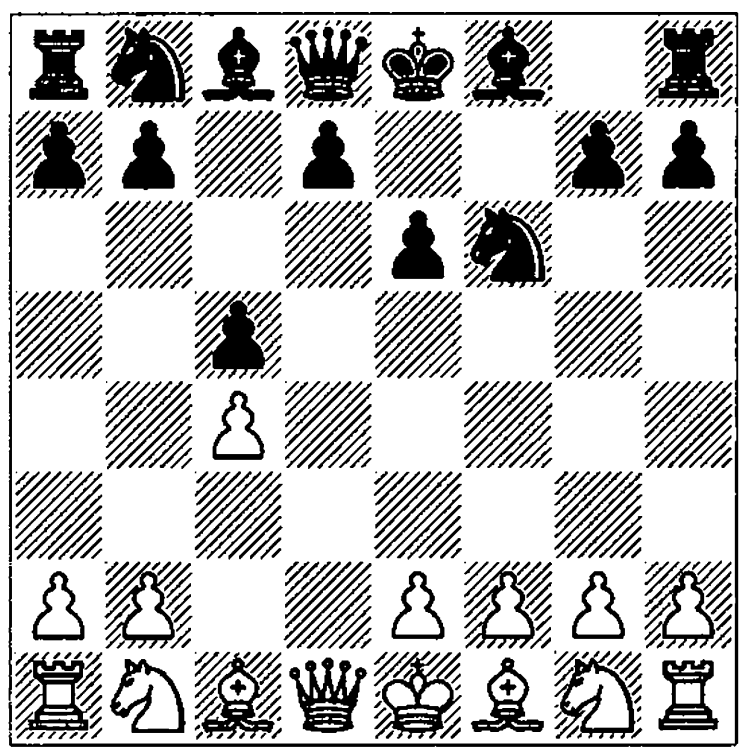
A: 4 dxe6 15
B: 4 g3 16
C: 4 ♘f3 17
D: 4 ♘c3 19

Throughout the book, I will emphasize the fact that there is a significant distinction between Benoni systems in which White is already committed to the move ♘f3 and those in which he delays or foregoes that move. This difference is particularly important in practice, because many d-pawn defenders will use the move-order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6. Then, after 3 ♘c3, they will choose the Nimzo-Indian (3...♗b4) or the Queen's Gambit Declined (3...d5) rather than enter a Modern Benoni by 3...c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6. But these same players are often perfectly willing to play the Benoni after 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6, precisely because White has already played ♘f3. In that case, Black does not have to deal with the white systems of Chapters 5, 7 and 8, and also gains some flexibility against other systems, a prime example being his ability to delay ...♗g7 in favour of ...a6 in certain variations of the Modern Main Line of Chapter 9. I will often refer to the differences between systems with and without ♘f3 as we move along.

A)

4 dxe6 fxe6 *(D)*

To me, 4...dxe6 5 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 looks playable, but it's not surprising that Black wants something more interesting.


W

Although 4 dxe6 is barely mentioned by theory, it can hardly be that bad. Black gets an extra centre pawn, and White gains the opportunity to exert pressure down the d-file. After 4...fxe6, we see:

a) 5 ♗g5 d5!? (5...♘c6 is a solid approach; e.g., 6 ♘c3 ♗e7 7 e4 0-0 8 ♘f3 d6 =) 6 e4!? (more ambitious than 6 e3 ♗e7 {6...♘c6 is also fine} 7 ♘c3 d4!? {again, there is nothing wrong with 7...♘c6} 8 exd4 cxd4 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♘e4, P.Larsen-O.Jakobsen, Herlev 1997, when 10...0-0 11 ♗d3 e5 12 ♘f3 ♗g4 = could follow) 6...h6! (a bold pawn sacrifice; 6...♗e7 7 cxd5 exd5 8 exd5 ♕xd5 is equal but dull) 7 ♗xf6 (after 7 ♗h4 g5! 8 ♗g3 ♘xe4 9 ♕h5+ ♔e7 White lacks compensation) 7...♕xf6 8 exd5 exd5 9 cxd5!? (9 ♕e2+ ♔d8! 10 ♘c3 d4 11 ♘d5 ♕g6 12 0-0-0 ♗d6 13 ♘f3 ♖e8 14 ♕d2 ♘c6 gives Black a safe king-position and good piece-play) 9...♗d6 10 ♗b5+ ♘d7 11 ♘c3 0-0 (Black has plenty of

activity for a pawn) 12 ♘f3 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♗d7 15 ♕c2 (15 ♘e4 ♖ae8 16 0-0? ♖xe4! 17 ♗xe4 ♕f4) 15...♖ae8+ 16 ♗e4 ♗f5 17 f3? (17 0-0-0 ♗xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♕f4+ 19 ♘d2 ♕xf2 ∓) 17...♕h4+ 18 ♔e2 b5! 19 g3 ♕h5 20 ♔d2 ♗xe4 21 ♘xe4 ♕xd5+ 22 ♔e2 ♕h5 23 g4 ♕h3 24 ♖af1 ♖xf3 0-1 Foguelman-Mecking, Buenos Aires 1967. This is the most famous game with 4 dxe6.

b) 5 ♘c3 d5 (5...♘c6 6 e4 ♗e7 7 ♘f3 0-0 =; 5...♗e7 6 g3 d5 7 ♗g2 d4 8 ♘e4 0-0 9 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 10 ♘f3 ♗d7 11 h4? ♗c6 12 ♕c2 e5 ∓ 13 ♘g5?? d3 –+ Morgner-Nikitin, Dresden 1993) 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗g5 (7 e3 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 ♗e7 =) 7...d4 8 ♘e4 ♕b6! (8...♗e7 =) 9 ♘xf6+ gxf6 10 ♗c1 ♗f5 ∓; Black can follow up with the moves ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0.

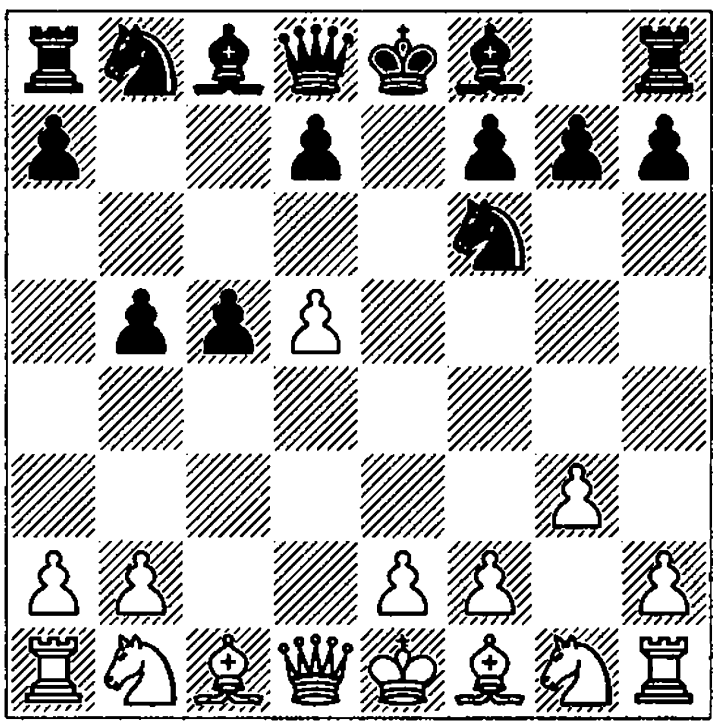
c) 5 g3 is probably the most frequent move, although it seems to be no better than the others: 5...♘c6 6 ♗g2 d5 (again, Black can delay a central commitment; e.g., 6...♗e7 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 e3?! ♖e8 10 ♘c3 d4 11 exd4 cxd4 12 ♘a4 e5 ∓ Padrak-Simantsev, Polanica Zdroj 1999) 7 ♘h3!? d4 8 ♘f4 ♗d6 9 ♘d3 h6 10 e4 e5 (resembling a King's Indian Defence with colours reversed) 11 f4 (11 0-0 ♗e6 12 ♘d2 0-0 13 f4 exf4 14 gxf4 ♘g4!) 11...♗g4 12 ♗f3 h5 13 ♘d2 ♕d7 14 f5 (14 0-0 h4!) 14...g6! 15 h3 (15 fxg6 0-0-0 with the ideas ...♖dg8 and ...h4) 15...♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 gxf5 17 exf5 (17 ♕xf5? ♕xf5 18 exf5 e4 19 ♘f4 ♗xf4 20 gxf4 ♘b4) 17...0-0-0 18 ♘e4 ♘xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♖dg8 20 ♔f2 ♘e7 21 ♘xe5 ♕xf5+ 22 ♕xf5+ ♘xf5 23 ♗f4 (23 g4 ♘e3) 23...h4! ∓ Mochalov-Tseshkovsky, Minsk 1982.

B)

4 g3 exd5 5 cxd5

This will almost always transpose to Chapter 6 after 5...d6 6 ♗g2 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘c3, which I feel is fine for Black. Nevertheless, some very good players have opted for...

5...b5!? *(D)*



As this is not strictly speaking a repertoire move, I will give it only a superficial look.

6 ♗g2

6 a4 b4 7 f3!? g6 8 e4 ♗g7 9 ♘d2 0-0 10 ♘c4 d6 11 ♗f4 ♗a6! = Korchnoi-Timman, Tilburg 1987. Then 12 ♘xd6? would fail to 12...♘h5.

6...d6

6...♗b7 7 e4 d6 is also played.

7 ♘f3

An intriguing gambit is 7 b4!? cxb4 (7...♗b7! Timman) 8 a3 bxa3 9 ♘xa3. A good answer is 9...♗d7 10 ♘f3 a5 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♘d4 b4 13 ♘c4 ♖a6,

as in Hulak-Podlesnik, Portorož 1996. The idea 7 a4 b4 8 ♘d2 was answered by 8...♘bd7!? (to be ready to play ...♘b6 in reply to ♘c4) 9 b3 g6 10 ♗b2 ♗g7 11 ♘c4 ♘b6 = in Shumiakina-Aseev, Rostov 1993.

After the text-move (7 ♘f3), a good high-level example went 7...g6 8 ♘fd2! ♘bd7 9 ♘c3 a6 10 a4 b4 11 ♘ce4 a5 12 ♕b3 ♗e7 13 ♘c4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♘b6 15 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 16 ♗h6 ♗a6 17 ♗d3 ♗f8 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 0-0 ♔g7 20 e4 ♖he8 = Portisch-Korchnoi, Lucerne OL 1982.

C)

4 ♘f3

Now:

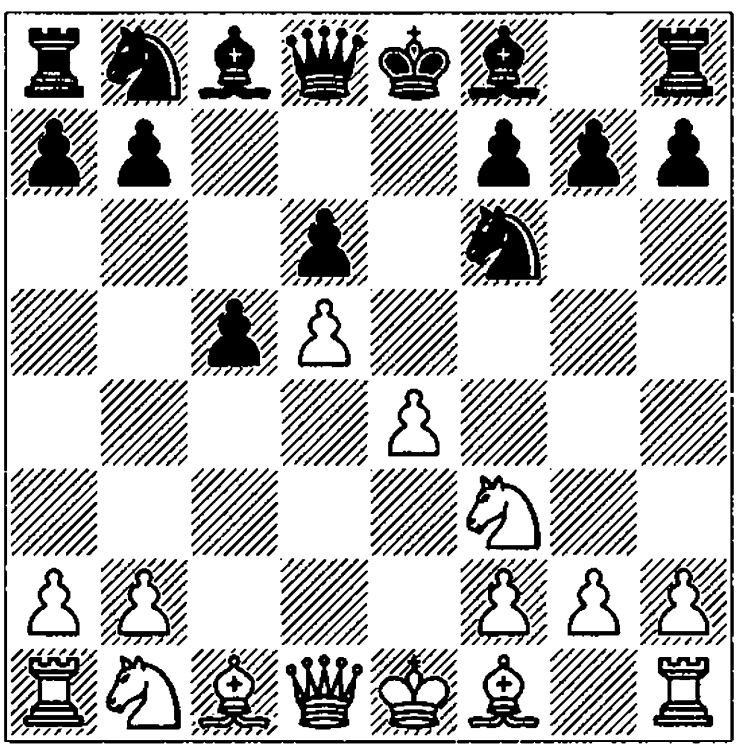
C1: 4...exd5 17

C2: 4...d6 18

C1)

4...exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 *(D)*

B



Relying upon the tactic 6...♘xe4?? 7 ♕a4+. 6 e4 is a clever move-order and probably the most important of these irregular lines. It will mainly appeal to those who want to play ♗d3, 0-0, and perhaps h3, either foregoing ♘c3 in favour of ♘d2-c4 or delaying ♘c3 so as later to transpose to a favourable version of the Modern Main Line (see Chapter 9).

6...g6

This natural move leads to some murky complications, although it seems ultimately quite playable for Black. An alternative is 6...a6: 7 ♗d3 (7 a4 ♘xe4; 7 ♘c3 ♗g4 8 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 9 ♘d2 b5 10 ♕c2 ♘b6 =) 7...♗g4 8 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 9 h3 and now:

a) 9...♘e5! is a possibility which I was afraid of when I played White in one game; e.g., 10 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 11 ♘xf3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 g6 with a position in which the simplification prevents White from overrunning Black's position by f4 and e5, and allows the g7-bishop and queenside majority to exert themselves. I would nevertheless be interested to see how this would play out in practice, since the two bishops are always a force.

b) 9...♗xf3 10 ♘xf3 g6 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 (perhaps better is 12...♕c7!? with the idea that 13 e5 can be met by 13...dxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd7 ♘xf4 – Shaked) 13 ♕d2 0-0 14 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 15 ♖ad1, Yermolinsky-Shaked, USA Ch (Denver) 1998, and here Shaked gives the interesting line 15...♘h5!? 16 ♗h2 (16 ♗g5 ♗f6 17 ♗e3 ♗g7 "with the idea ...♘e5" – Shaked, but Black would have to be careful not to rush; e.g., 18 b3 ♘e5? 19 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 20 g4 ♘f6 21 ♗f4 ♕e7 22 e5 must favour White) 16...♘e5 17 ♗e2 ♘f6!? 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe4! 19 ♘xg6

(19 ♕c2 ♗xe5 20 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♗d3 f5) 19...hxg6 20 ♕c2 ♘f6 =.

7 ♗d3

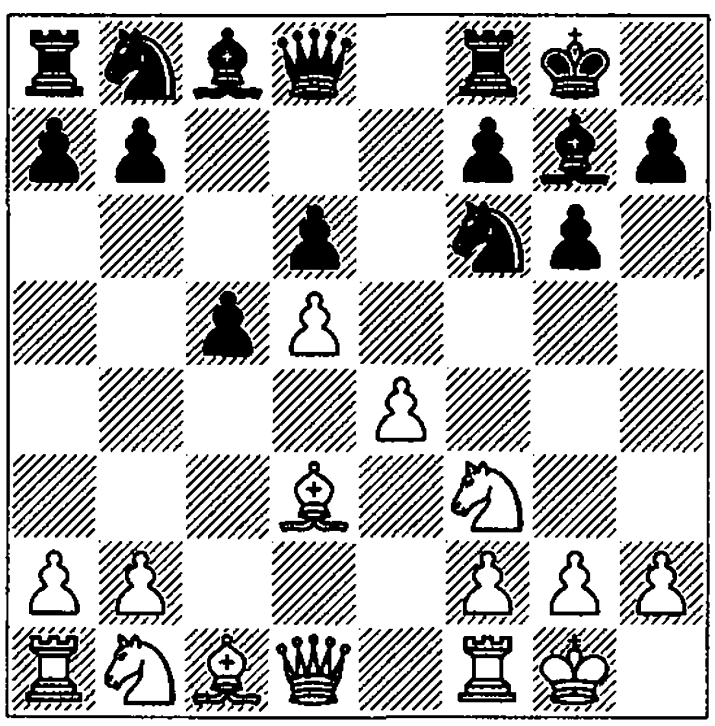
7 ♗b5+ is apparently pointless, but gets played in such positions: 7...♗d7 (or 7...♘bd7! =) 8 ♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♗f4, Naer-Kostenko, Tula 1999, and now one approach is just 10...0-0 11 ♗xd6 ♖e8 12 e5 ♘e4!? 13 ♘c3 ♘xd6 14 exd6 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♘b6, which is at least equal. 10...♕b8 11 ♘c3 0-0 is also interesting, since Black has ideas like ...♖e8 and ...b5, or, in response to a4, ...c4 and ...♘c5.

7...♗g7

After 7...a6 8 h3 ♗g7 9 0-0 b5 10 a4 b4 11 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 12 a5 White is simply better.

8 0-0 0-0 *(D)*

But not 8...♗g4? 9 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 10 e5!.



This little-played position is ignored by theory. Here are some plausible continuations:

a) 9 ♖e1 ♗g4 10 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 11 h3 ♘e5! 12 ♗c2 ♘xf3+ 13 ♘xf3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♘d7 =.

b) 9 h3 b5! 10 ♖e1 (10 a4 c4 11 ♗e2 b4 12 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 13 ♖e1 ♖e8 =; for example, 14 ♗b5 ♗d7 15 ♘bd2 ♘c5 16 ♘c4 ♖xe1+ 17 ♘xe1 a6 18 ♗xd7 ♘bxd7! with the point 19 ♘xd6? ♘e5 ∓; 10 ♘bd2 a6 11 a4 c4 12 ♗c2 ♗b7 =) 10...c4 11 ♗c2 ♘a6 12 ♘c3 ♗d7 13 ♗f4 b4 14 ♘e2 ♖e8 15 ♘g3 ♕b6 with a very unclear position that I would assess as dynamically balanced. This is one of those cases I mentioned above in which 16 e5?! dxe5 17 ♘xe5 exposes White's d-pawn after 17...♖ad8 or 17...♗b5 intending ...♖ad8.

c) 9 ♘bd2 ♗g4 10 a4 (after 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 ♖e8 12 ♖e1 ♘bd7 13 ♗f4 c4 14 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 15 ♕c2 f5 I think that Black is just active enough) 10...♘bd7 (perhaps 10...♘fd7 intending ...♘e5 is simpler, in view of 11 ♘c4 ♘e5 or 11 h3 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♘xf3+, etc.) 11 ♘c4 ♘b6 (or here 11...♘e8, intending ...♘e5; then 12 ♗f4 is met by 12...♘b6!, equalizing on the spot) 12 ♘e3 c4?! (last chance? Black still had 12...♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♘fd7!) 13 ♗e2 (13 ♗c2 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♖c8) was played in From-Vistisen, Danish Ch 1989. I think that White is better now; on 13...♗xf3, he plays 14 gxf3! (14 ♗xf3 ♖e8 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘xc4 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♘xd6 ♖d4 19 ♕c2 ♕b8!) 14...♘h5 15 a5 ♘d7 16 ♘xc4 ♕h4, and now something like 17 ♗e3.

All told, Black's play is satisfactory in these 6 e4 lines, but he should be aware that they exist.

C2)

4...d6!?

This very rare move is a clever way of bypassing the line above, since now 5 e4? is bad in view of 5...♘xe4, and 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 is a normal Benoni. White can try to go his own way by 5 dxe6!? fxe6 (5...♗xe6!?) 6 ♘c3 ♘c6 with play similar to Line A (4 dxe6), or by 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 ♘xd5!? ♘xd5 (6...g6!? 7 ♗g5 ♗g7) 7 ♕xd5 ♘c6 8 ♘g5 ♕e7 (8...♕f6? 9 ♘xh7!) 9 ♗d2 h6 10 ♘f3 ♗e6 11 ♕e4 0-0-0 ∓ with ...d5 next, Galliamova-Yakovich, Novgorod 1997. Clearly Black has no problems in either case.

D)

4 ♘c3 exd5

Now:

D1: 5 ♘xd5 19

D2: 5 cxd5 20

D1)

5 ♘xd5

As far as I can see, this move doesn't even appear in *ECO*. One could not call it a common continuation, but it will appear from time to time, especially at lower levels.

5...♘xd5 6 ♕xd5 *(D)*

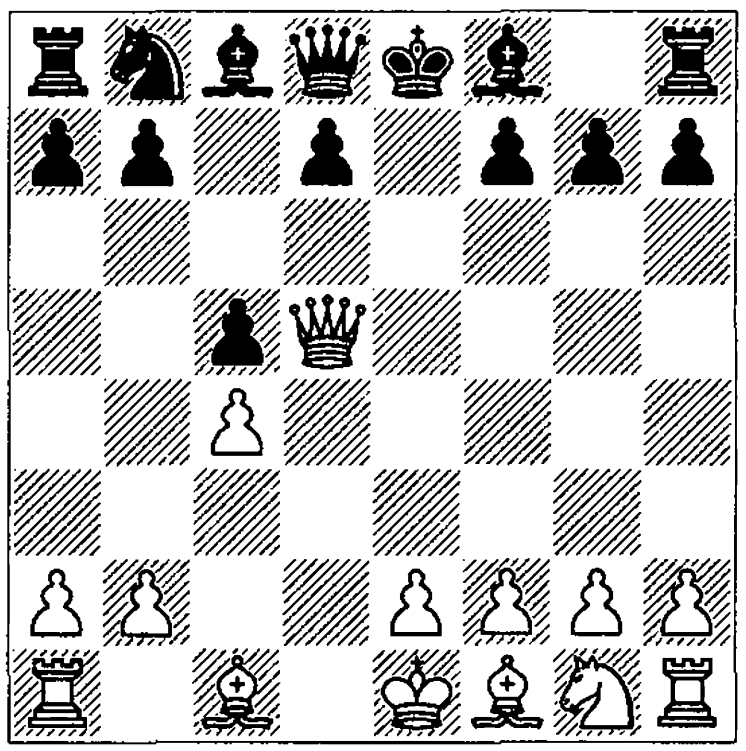
I have seen no serious examples of 6 cxd5 d6 (e.g., 7 ♗d2 ♗e7 8 ♗c3 ♗f6). Such a position is easier for Black to play than the main lines, an example of the general tendency for simplified positions to favour Black. This theme will recur as the book proceeds.

6...♘c6

The following should also equalize:

a) 6...♗e7 discourages b3 in view of ...♗f6; e.g., 7 e3 ♘a6!? 8 ♕d1 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘c7 10 ♘f3 d5 = Binks-Trejos, Istanbul OL 2000.

B



b) 6...d6 7 e4 ♘c6 8 ♗f4 ♗e6 9 ♕d2 ♕f6 = O.Gonzalez-Anton, Spain 1996.

c) 6...♘a6!? 7 ♗d2 ♘c7 8 ♕d3 d5 9 cxd5 ♕xd5 10 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 11 e4 ♘f6 12 0-0-0, Cabrera-Romero, Spanish Cht 1990, and now 12...♗d7 (or 12...a6) 13 ♗c4 ♗c6 looks equal.

7 ♘f3 d6 8 e4

Or:

a) 8 ♘g5 ♕f6 9 ♗d2!? ♗e6 10 ♕d3, Maciag-Porod, Recklinghausen 1999. Now Black should grab the pawn by 10...♕xb2! 11 ♗c3 ♕a3.

b) 8 g3 ♗e6 9 ♕e4 ♗e7 10 ♗g2 0-0 11 0-0 d5 = Mawunto-Myo, Jakarta 1997.

8...♗e6 9 ♕d1 ♗e7 10 ♗d3 0-0

Or 10...♘e5 =.

After the text-move (10...0-0), S.Nikolić-Rogers, Moscow GMA 1989 continued 11 0-0 a6 12 ♗f4 ♗f6 13 ♕d2 ♕e7 14 ♘g5 h6 (14...♘e5 15 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 also leads to equality) 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♗g3 ♗d4 with an equal position.

D2)

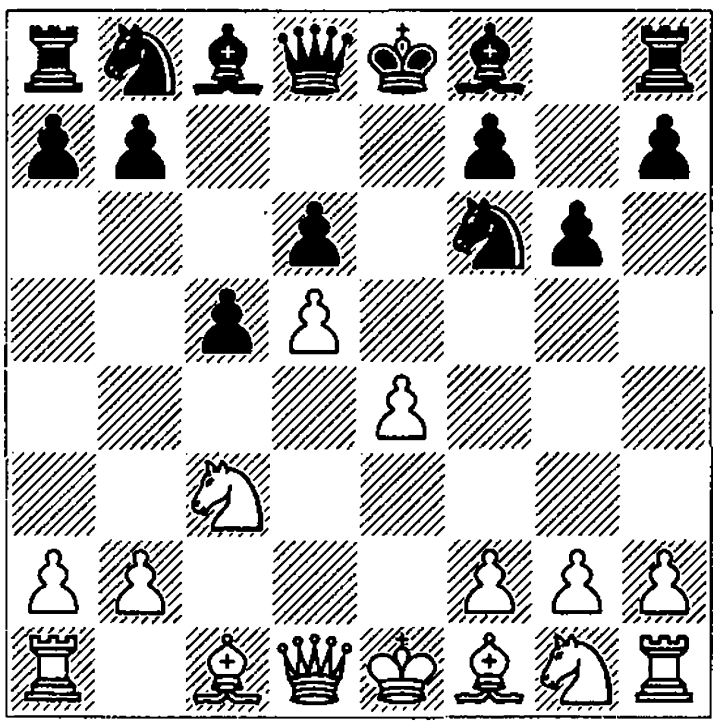
5 cxd5 d6 6 e4

6 h3 is a rare move-order:

a) 6...g6 7 e4!? (7 ♘f3 is Line A of Chapter 9; one idea after 7 ♗g5 ♗g7 8 e3 h6 9 ♗h4 is 9...♘a6 with the idea ...♘c7, since h3 is wasted in that case) 7...♗g7 8 ♘f3 transposes to Line B2 of Chapter 9.

b) 6...a6 side-steps that line: 7 a4 (7 ♘f3 b5 8 a4 b4 9 ♘b1 ♗b7 10 ♗g5, Flottat-Durret, Paris 1993, 10...h6! 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 is good for Black) 7...♕e7 8 ♘f3 g6 (8...♗f5!? is also a good option with this particular move-order) transposes to Line A of Chapter 9.

6...g6 *(D)*



This standard position normally leads to the main lines, discussed in later chapters, as noted below. The deviations are innocuous at best.

7 ♗b5+

An attempt to simplify, but in general, White doesn't want early simplification in the Benoni. The argument that White is exchanging off his bad bishop ignores the fact that he is also solving Black's difficulties by exchanging the problem bishop on c8 or allowing it to develop more easily. Also, while Black's other bishop on g7 is technically 'bad', White would gladly trade it for his good one!

Transpositions and oddities:

a) 7 ♗g5 is discussed in Chapter 3.

b) Irregular lines with 7 ♗d3 are examined at the beginning of Chapter 7.

c) 7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 8 ♘g3 is also analysed at the beginning of Chapter 7.

d) 7 h3 is found in the introduction to Chapter 9.

e) 7 g3?! (this doesn't go well with e4) 7...♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 ♘f3?! (9 ♘ge2 ♖e8 {intending 10...b5} 10 a4 ♘a6 11 0-0 c4) 9...b5! 10 ♘d2 b4 11 ♘e2 ♖e8 ∓ I.Stein-Kundin, Israeli U-18 Ch 1999; Black has active pieces, and d3 is a weakness.

f) After the conventional 7 ♗e2 ♗g7, there are a number of continuations that don't quite fit into other chapters:

f1) 8 h3 0-0 9 ♘f3 ♖e8 10 ♘d2 is just a Classical Main Line with a dubious tempo spent on h3. The ...♘a6-c7 plan should gain in strength.

f2) 8 h4!? has been answered by 8...h5, which is fine, but it seems to me that 8...♕e7 also deserves attention; e.g., 9 ♕c2 (9 h5? ♘xe4 10 ♕a4+ ♗d7 ∓; 9 f3 0-0 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗e3 ♘h5) 9...h6 10 h5 g5 11 ♗e3!? 0-0 and White has some problems developing.

f3) 8 g4!? 0-0 9 h4 (9 g5 ♘e8 10 h4 f5) 9...♖e8 10 f3 a6 (or 10...♘a6) 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 h5 ♘e5 13 ♘h3 ♖b8 14 ♘f2 b5! 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗d7 17

♗e2 ♖b4, Kharlamov-Kogan, Vilnius 1966. Nunn says that Black has "excellent play for the pawn"; and in any case, Black can play just about any plan (such as 10...♘a6 and 11...♘c7), as White has neglected to develop and his kingside advance doesn't achieve much.

f4) 8 ♗e3 a6 9 a4 ♕e7! disturbs White's development.

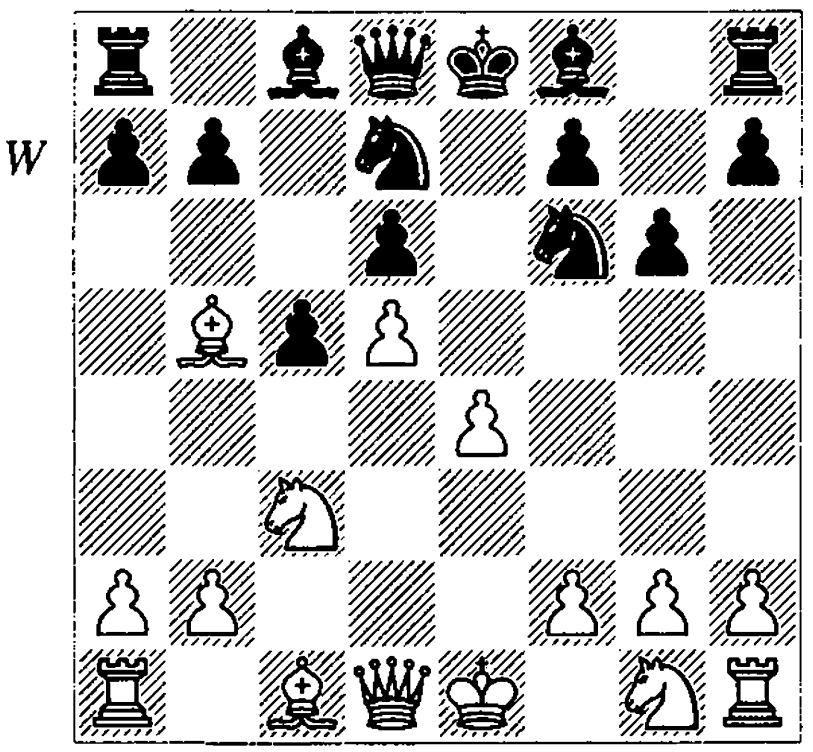
f5) 8 ♘f3 (White aims for the Classical Main Line of Chapter 10 while ensuring that he can meet ...♗g4 lines with ♘d2) 8...0-0 9 0-0 and now 9...♖e8 is the main line of Chapter 10, but for those who want to avoid ...♖e8 systems, Black can also play 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4, when 11 ♗f4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 is Line B112 of Chapter 9, and 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 is note 'b3' to Black's 9th move in Line A of Chapter 10. Both variations are safe and recommended for Black.

7...♘bd7 *(D)*

All the reasonable choices are good here, such as 7...♘fd7 and 7...♗d7 8 a4 ♗g7 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8 11 ♖e1 a6 12 ♗xd7 ♘bxd7 13 ♗f4 ♕c7 14 ♕b3 ♘g4 15 ♖ad1 ♘ge5 = Usachyi-Ophoff, German seniors Ch (Weilburg) 1998.

8 ♗f4

To tie the f8-bishop to the d-pawn. Instead, 8 a4 a6 9 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 is already equal, while trying for a Pawn-Storm Attack by 8 f4!? gives up the bishop-pair for very little: 8...a6 9



♗xd7+ ♘xd7 10 ♘f3 ♗g7 11 0-0 0-0 12 a4 ♖b8 = Tošić-G.Kuzmin, Alushta 1994.

8...♘h5 9 ♗e3 ♗g7 10 g4!? ♘hf6 11 g5?!

Too greedy.

11...♘h5 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 ♗xh5 gxh5 14 ♕xh5 ♕a5

Black has a big advantage. Münder-Wockenfuss, West Germany 1974 went 15 ♗d2 (15 ♘ge2 ♘e5 {intending ...♗g4 or ...♘d3+} 16 0-0-0 ♗g4 17 ♕h4 ♗xe2 18 ♘xe2 ♘c4 wins for Black) 15...♘e5 16 ♕e2 c4 17 ♔f1 ♗g4!? (or 17...f5) 18 f3 ♗h5 19 ♘d1 ♕b6 20 ♗c3 f5 with an ideal attack.

These deviations from the standard Modern Benoni should not concern Black. Most of them either release White's hold on the centre or neglect development. The exception is 4 ♘f3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4, but Black has plenty of play in that case as well.

2 Systems with ♗f4

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6

In this chapter, we look at a wide variety of systems with ♗f4 for White. These are traditional variations, like those of Chapters 3 and 4, which are not in vogue and considered by some to be worked out. But the ♗f4 approach is underrated, in my opinion, and can cause Black considerably more trouble than other unfashionable lines. In fact, if it weren't for the popularity of the Modern Main Line in Chapter 9 and the Taimanov Attack in Chapter 5, I think that we would see more of ♗f4 at the top levels.

There is a certain logic to White's strategy, since ♗f4 directly targets d6, the primary weakness in Black's position. Once Black plays ...♗g7, White can often increase that pressure by the manoeuvre ♕a4+ and if Black replies ...♗d7, then ♕b3. Then the queen attacks b7, and the bishop on f4 threatens the d6-pawn. Another strategy for White is simply to take direct aim at d6 by, for example, playing ♘f3-d2-c4, perhaps with h3 at some point to give the bishop an escape square (h2) versus ...♘h5. Finally, of course, Black has the general problem that a natural move like ...♘bd7 leaves his d-pawn *en prise*, and therefore he may need to play a move like ...♕e7 or ...♕c7 before he might like to commit his queen.

On the other hand, ♗f4 is not particularly forceful and allows Black the luxury of early queenside expansion without having to fret over e4, f4 and e5. The bishop on f4 will also be exposed to attack by ...♘h5 and White may have to take time to prepare against that move.

In contrast to some Benoni variations, I don't believe that the established theory on the ♗f4 systems always suffices to give Black an even game. Thus I will sometimes propose other ways to equalize, accompanied by considerable analysis. When I bypass a well-established solution, I will try to give a brief impression of why I have done so.

Having said that, this chapter's material is organized as follows:

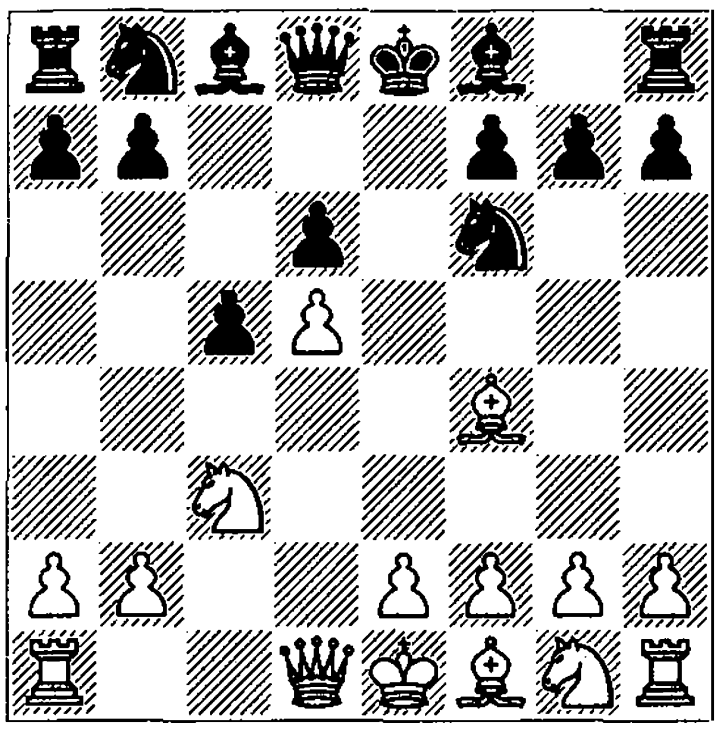
A: 6 ♗f4 22
B: 6 ♘f3 with 7 ♗f4 (and 7 ♕a4+) 24
C: 6 e4 with 7 ♗f4 37

As much as in any other chapter, the lines here can easily transpose into one another. It may be best to ignore questions of move-order until one gets a general feel for the lines involved.

A)

6 ♗f4 *(D)*

B



White doesn't normally play this move so early. Both sides have various transpositional possibilities, but there are also independent continuations of note, including the exciting main line that follows.

6...g6

A true Benoni. Since Black hasn't committed to this move yet, he has some unusual alternatives:

a) 6...♗e7 keeps an eye on d6. Uhlmann-Vasiukov, Gotha 1957 continued 7 e3 (7 e4! 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♖e8 9 ♘f3 ♗f8 10 ♘d2 looks more challenging; on 10...♘a6, 11 0-0 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♖b1 ± intending b4 at some point is an idea, but Black's position is solid) 7...0-0 8 h3 ♕a5 9 ♘f3!? (9 ♕d2 a6 intending ...b5) 9...♘e4 10 ♕c2 f5 11 ♗d3 ♘a6!, intending to meet 12 ♗xe4 by 12...♘b4 13 ♕b1 fxe4 14 ♕xe4 ♖f7 15 g4 (versus ...♗f5) 15...♕a6 with an attack; e.g., 16 ♔d2!? c4 17 ♘e1 ♗f6 18 a3 ♕a5 and the d-pawn hangs.

b) 6...a6 7 a4 and then:

b1) 7...♘h5 looks odd, but makes some sense; e.g., 8 ♗d2 g6 9 e4 ♗g7, and now Zagorskis-Kovačević, Cappelle la Grande 1998 continued 10 ♗e2 (10 g4!? ♘f6 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 h4 ♕e7 13 ♕c2 is equal but contains risks for both sides) 10...♘f6 11 ♘f3 ♗g4, and Black has a reasonable version of a main line Classical Benoni (Chapter 10), since White's extra move ♗d2 gets in the way.

b2) 7...g6 is an obvious response, trying to transpose into a 'normal' Benoni while eliminating White's ♕a4+ option. Then 8 ♘f3 ♗g7 9 e4 ♗g4 (9...0-0 10 ♘d2 is dealt with in note 'c' to White's 8th move in Line B22) is another Classical Benoni, unless White plays 10 ♕b3, whereupon 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xb7 ♘bd7 12 gxf3 transposes to note 'c' to Black's 10th move in Line B113 of Chapter 9.

7 ♕a4+

This move is most consistent with the themes of this chapter. Instead, 7 ♘f3 and 7 e4 are dealt with in Lines B2 and C, but the following continuations are unique:

a) 7 ♕d2 a6 8 a4 ♕e7 (8...♗g7 9 ♗h6 0-0 =) 9 ♕e3 (9 ♗h6 is more interesting) 9...♕xe3 10 ♗xe3 ♘bd7 = Petronić-Kosanović, Yugoslav Cht (Cetinje) 1993. Black has good development and a sound structure for the endgame.

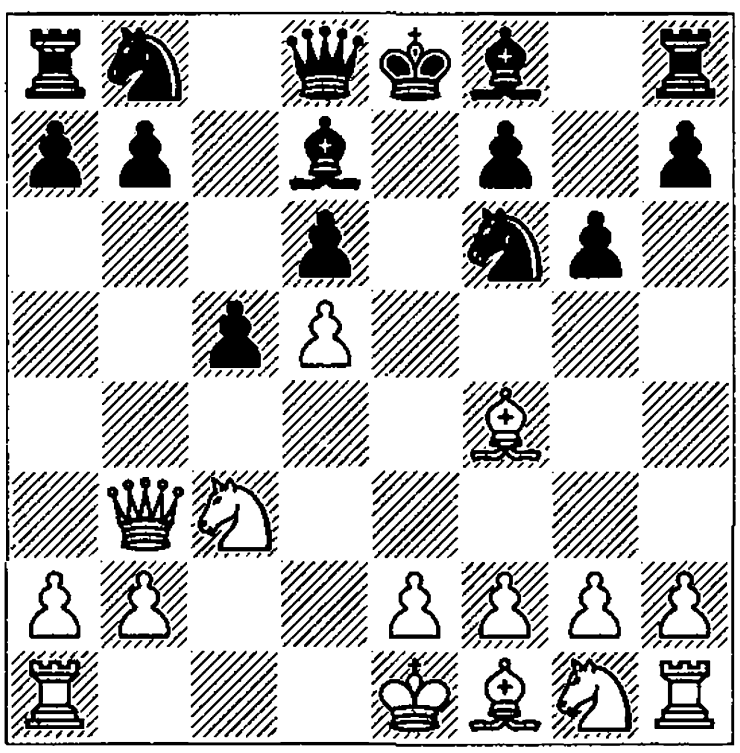
b) 7 e3 a6 (7...♗g7 8 ♘f3 transposes to note 'a' to White's 8th move in Line B22) 8 ♘f3 b5 9 a4!? b4 10 ♘b1 ♗g7 11 ♗c4, Zagorskis-Kleeschaetzky, Berlin 1993, and now 11...♘h5! 12 ♗g5 ♕a5 looks good, hitting b2; e.g., 13 ♕b3 h6 14 ♗h4 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘xg3 and ...♘d7.

7...♗d7

In such positions, ...♘bd7 ties Black to the defence of d6, and is generally undesirable.

8 ♕b3 *(D)*

B



This situation will become quite familiar in the sections that follow, although the exact position before us has rarely arisen in practice. Having lured Black's bishop to d7, White takes aim at b7.

8...b5!?

An extremely common pawn sacrifice in the Benoni designed to convert a relatively passive position into one with a lead in development and open lines. If White accepts the pawn, he will lose influence in the centre and be exposed to attack down the b-file.

While promising and entertaining, 8...b5 isn't strictly necessary. Perhaps Black didn't like the looks of 8...♕c7 9 e4 ♗g7 10 ♘b5 (10 ♘f3 is Line C, which 8...b5 side-steps) 10...♗xb5 11 ♗xb5+ ♘bd7, which gives White the two bishops. But in fact, Black stands well in that case. The e4-pawn hangs and ...a6 followed by ...b5 has to be dealt with. Moreover, Black's knights have good prospects in such positions, as we will see in similar positions throughout the book.

9 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 10 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 11 ♕d3

Black threatened ...♖b8 as well as ...♘xd5.

11...♕b6

Also of interest is 11...♘b6 12 e4 ♕e7!?. After 13 0-0-0 ♗g7 14 f3 0-0 15 ♘e2, Black plays 15...♘h5 with the idea of ...f5.

12 b3

Black has good play after 12 ♕e3+ ♔d8! or 12 ♗c1 ♕b4+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xb2 14 ♗c3 ♕a3 =.

After 12 b3, the game Hausner-Belaska, Prague 1991 continued 12...♗g7 13 ♖d1 0-0 14 ♘f3 c4!? (an aggressive move, but 14...♖fe8! looks stronger, planning 15 e3?? ♕b4+ or 15 ♘d2 ♘h5) 15 bxc4 ♖ab8 16 ♕c2 (better is 16 ♘d2!, although White is still underdeveloped) 16...♘c5 17 ♗d2 ♕b2 with considerable pressure for Black.

B)

6 ♘f3 g6

This section deals with ♘f3 and ♗f4, delaying or foregoing e4. Of course, 7 ♗f4 is the main move here, but the rare 7 ♕a4+ also intends ♗f4, so we will look at it as well:

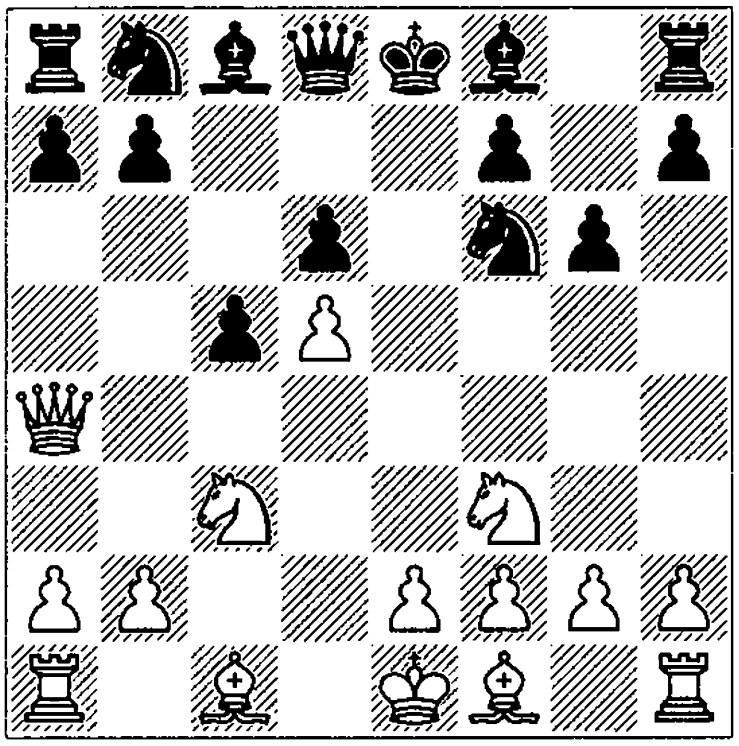
B1: 7 ♕a4+!? 24
B2: 7 ♗f4 26

B1)

7 ♕a4+!? *(D)*

This check has been played recently, drawing the attention of some strong players. White's idea is to wait a bit before committing to ♗f4, and to avoid early ...a6 lines like 7 ♗f4 a6. Notice that the similar 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ is discussed in note 'c' to White's 8th move in Line B2 of Chapter 9.

B



After 7 ♕a4+, I will concentrate on the reply...

7...♗d7

Nevertheless, 7...♘bd7 seems quite playable. A recent game went 8 ♗f4 a6 9 e4 ♘h5!? (the less committal 9...♖b8 seems safer: 10 ♗e2 b5 11 ♕c2 ♕e7!? 12 ♘d2 ♗g7 =) 10 ♗g5 ♗e7!? (a new idea) 11 ♗h6 (11 ♗e3 0-0 12 ♕c2 ♘g7 13 ♗d3 f5) 11...♗f6 12 ♕c2 ♗g7 13 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 14 a4 0-0 15 ♗e2 f5 16 exf5 ♘xf5 17 0-0 ♘f6 = Cifuentes-Marin, Barcelona 2000.

8 ♕b3 ♕c7 9 e4

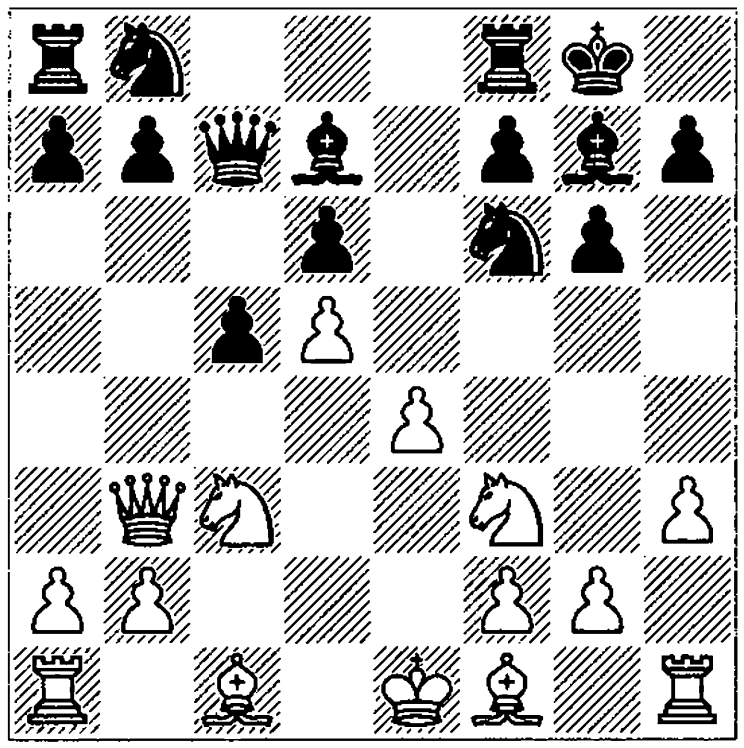
After 9 ♗f4, 9...♗g7 transposes to Line B22, while 9...♘h5!? is a logical option.

9...♗g7 10 h3

An original position which I believe is critical to the 7...♗d7 defence. Instead, 10 ♗f4 transposes to Line C.

10...0-0 *(D)*

W



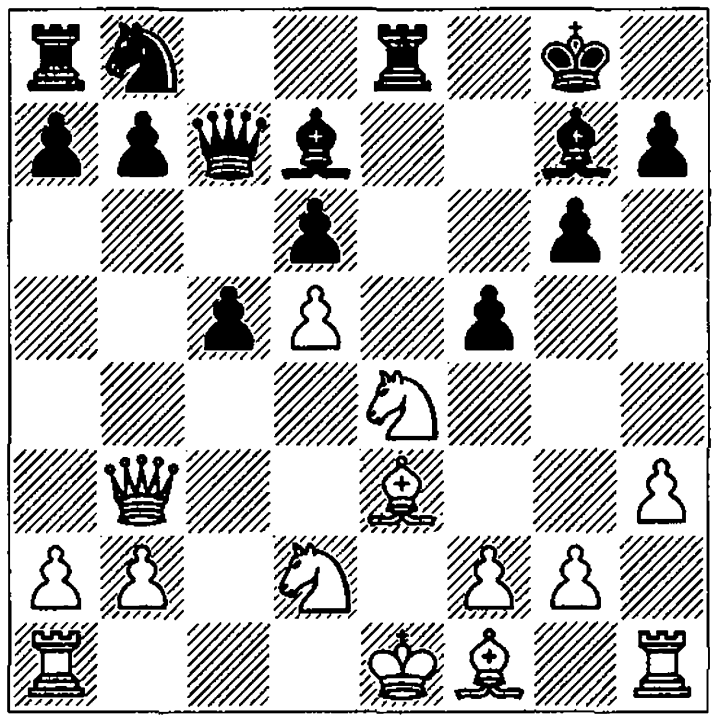
11 ♗e2

This seems most logical, but an analysis of possible future options is in order, if only because this variation might soon grow in popularity:

a) 11 ♗f4 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♘xe4! 13 ♘cxe4 f5 14 0-0-0! (14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♕xb7 ♕b6 16 ♕xa8 fxe4 is very good for Black; e.g., 17 ♘c4 ♕b4+ 18 ♔d1 ♗xb2! –+) 14...fxe4 15 ♘c4 b5 16 ♘xd6 ♖f8 17 ♗g3 c4 18 ♕b4!? (18 ♕c2 ♕a5 19 ♔b1 ♘a6 with a strong attack based upon ...c3) 18...♘a6 19 ♕a3 ♕b6 looks very promising for Black; e.g., 20 ♕e3 ♕xe3+ 21 fxe3 ♗h6! or 20 ♘xe4 ♖ae8 21 f3?? b4.

b) 11 ♗d3 ♖e8 12 0-0 c4! with equality.

c) 11 ♗e3 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♘xe4!? (12...a6 13 a4 ♘xe4 is also possible) 13 ♘cxe4 (13 ♘dxe4 f5 14 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 15 ♗e2 ♖xe3!? 16 fxe3 ♕xe3 ∞) 13...f5 *(D)* and White has:



c1) 14 ♘xc5 f4!? 15 ♘xd7 (15 ♕xb7? ♕xc5) 15...♘xd7 = 16 ♗b5 fxe3 17 fxe3 ♘c5 18 ♕a3 a6! 19 ♗e2 (19 ♗xe8 ♗xb2) 19...♕e7 ∓.

c2) 14 ♘xd6!? ♕xd6 15 ♕xb7 f4 16 ♘c4 ♕a6 17 ♕xa8 fxe3 18 fxe3 ♘c6 19 ♘d2 (19 ♕xe8+ ♗xe8 20 dxc6 ♗xc6 is comfortable for Black) 19...♕a5 20 ♕xe8+ ♗xe8 21 dxc6 ♗xb2 22 ♗c4+ ♔g7 23 ♖d1 ♕c3 with at least enough counterplay for Black.

11...♖e8 12 ♘d2

Here Black seems well-poised for the characteristic Benoni sacrifice:

12...b5!?

If needed, a safer line would be 12...♘a6 13 0-0 ♖ab8 (or 13...♖e7 14 ♖e1 ♖ae8) 14 ♖e1 (14 a4 ♘b4) 14...b5! 15 ♘xb5 ♕a5.

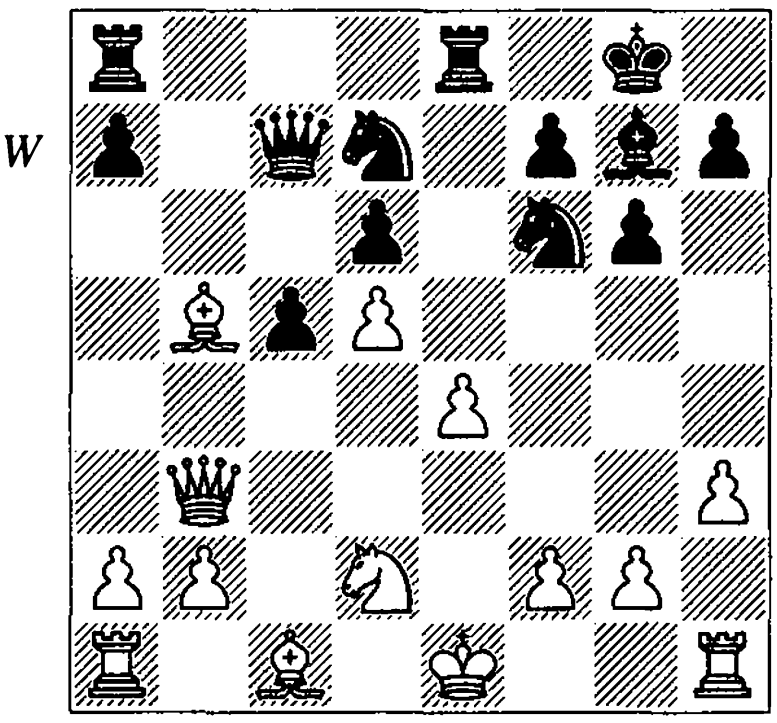
13 ♘xb5

13 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 14 ♘cxe4 f5 gives counterplay on the dark squares and down the b-file. Just for example: 15 f3 ♗xb5 (15...♗d4 16 ♗d3 ♗c8!?) 16 ♕xb5 ♘d7 17 0-0 fxe4 18 fxe4 (18 ♘xe4 ♘f6 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6) 18...♘e5 19 ♕e2 ♖ab8 20 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 21 gxf3 ♕b7! intending ...♕xd5.

13...♗xb5 14 ♗xb5

The alternative 14 ♕xb5 ♘bd7 15 f3 ♖ab8 16 ♕a4 ♘h5! 17 ♗b5 ♘b6 18 ♕c2 ♖e7 gives Black more than enough for a pawn, with ...♘g3, ...f5, and ...♗e5 or ...♗d4 to come.

14...♘bd7 *(D)*



White's e-pawn still hangs and 15 f3 ♘h5 is very difficult for him.

15 ♕a4 ♘xe4! 16 ♘xe4 ♖xe4+ 17 ♕xe4 ♕a5+ 18 ♗d2 ♕xb5

Black has more than enough compensation, threatening b2 and ...♘f6 or ...♘e5; e.g., 19 ♗c3 ♘f6 20 ♕f3 (20 ♗xf6 ♖e8!) 20...♖e8+ 21 ♔d1 ♘e4! 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 and Black wins!

The pawn sacrifice 12...b5 is an instructive example of Benoni dynamism; it would be fun to see more of this variation in practice.

B2)

7 ♗f4

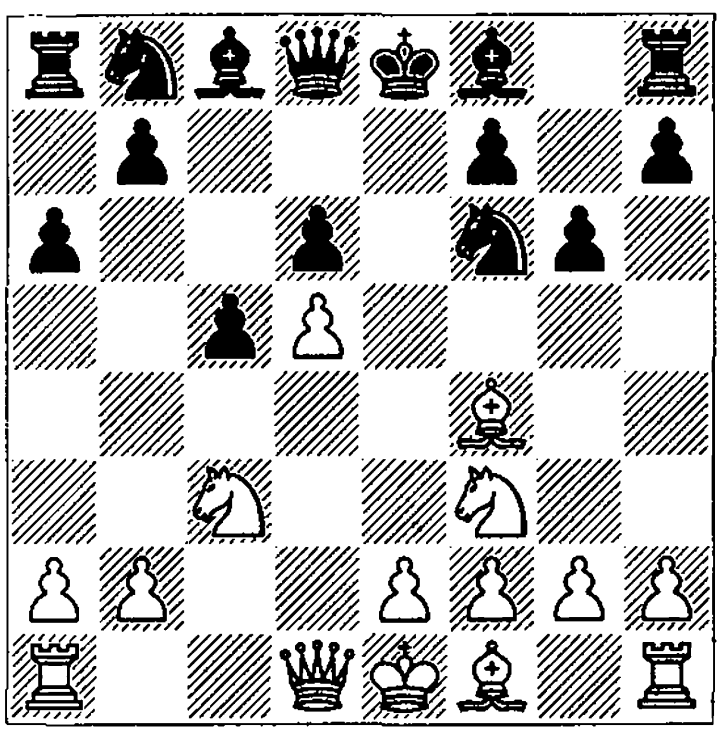
This is White's most popular move-order, introducing a very dangerous system which requires careful handling. Once again, the main idea is

♕a4+ followed by ♕b3. We will look at two systems against 7 ♗f4, introduced by these moves:

B21: 7...a6 27
B22: 7...♗g7 33

B21)

7...a6 *(D)*


W

This is a slightly safer move than 7...♗g7, keeping d6 guarded for a moment and discouraging ♕a4+. Black pays a price in development, but the counterattack by ...b5 is his justification. White has three replies to 7...a6:

B211: 8 ♘d2 27
B212: 8 a4 28
B213: 8 e4 30

Otherwise:

a) 8 ♕a4+!? is untried, but 8...b5 9 ♘xb5 ♗d7 10 e3 ♕b6 11 ♗g5 ♘g8 12 ♕e4+ ♗e7 13 ♘a3 ♕xb2 14 ♘c2 ♕c3+ looks fine for Black. Less clear, but perhaps also satisfactory for Black, is 8...♗d7 9 ♕c2 (9 ♕b3 b5) 9...♕c7 10 e4 (10 a4 ♗g7 11 h3!? resembles later lines) 10...♘h5 11 ♗e3 ♗g7.

b) 8 ♘e4!? ♘xe4 9 ♕a4+ ♘d7 10 ♕xe4+ ♗e7 (10...♕e7 11 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 12 e4 ♗g7 13 ♘d2!? b5 14 0-0-0 ♘e5 =) 11 ♗xd6 ♘f6 12 ♕xe7+ ♕xe7 13 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 is fine for Black, as White cannot hold on to the d-pawn; e.g., 14 ♖c1 b6 15 ♘e5 ♘xd5 16 g3 ♗e6 17 ♗g2 f6 18 ♘c4 b5 19 ♘a5!? ♖ac8 20 0-0 c4 21 ♖fd1 ♖hd8 ∓ Dreev-Ivanchuk, Lvov 1987. 22...c3 is threatened, and if 22 ♔f1, 22...b4! looks good.

B211)

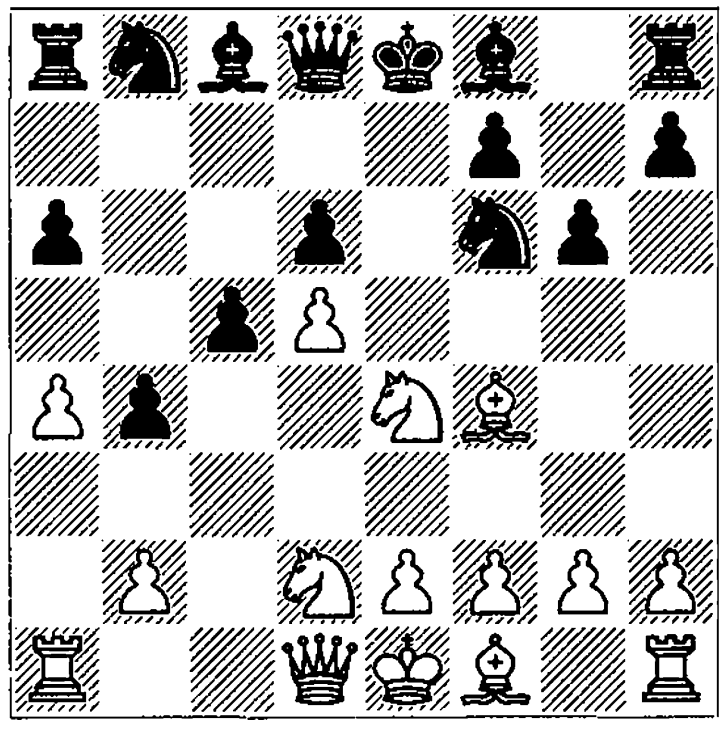
8 ♘d2 b5

Not 8...♗g7? 9 ♘c4 0-0 10 a4! (safest) 10...♘e8 11 ♕d2 and White has an advantageous version of the Knight's Tour Variation (Chapter 4); nor 8...♘h5?! 9 ♕a4+! ♕d7 (9...♗d7 10 ♕e4+ ♕e7 11 ♗xd6) 10 ♕e4+ ♗e7 11 ♗h6 and Black is tied up; e.g., 11...b5 12 ♕c2 f5?!, A.Petrosian-Yudasin, Moscow 1989, and now 13 e4! ±, according to Petrosian.

9 a4 b4

9...♘h5 10 ♗e3 b4 11 ♘ce4 ♘d7 12 ♘c4 ♘df6 is also fine.

10 ♘ce4 *(D)*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10...♗b7!

Or:

a) 10...♘xd5? 11 ♗xd6! ♗xd6 (if 11...♘e3, then 12 ♕b3! ♘xf1 13 ♕d5!) 12 ♘c4 ♗e7 13 ♘ed6+ ♗xd6 14 ♕xd5 ±.

b) 10...♘h5 11 ♗g5 f6 12 ♗e3 f5 13 g4! fxg4 (13...f4 14 ♗xc5!) 14 ♘c4 is probably fine for Black, but it's very messy.

11 ♗g5

11 e3 is dangerous if Black grabs on d5, but simply 11...♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♗e7 is fine; e.g., 13 ♗c4 (13 ♗h6 f5 14 ♘g3 ♗f6 =) 13...f5 14 ♘d2 ♗f6 15 ♕c2 0-0 intending ...♕e7 and ...♘d7.

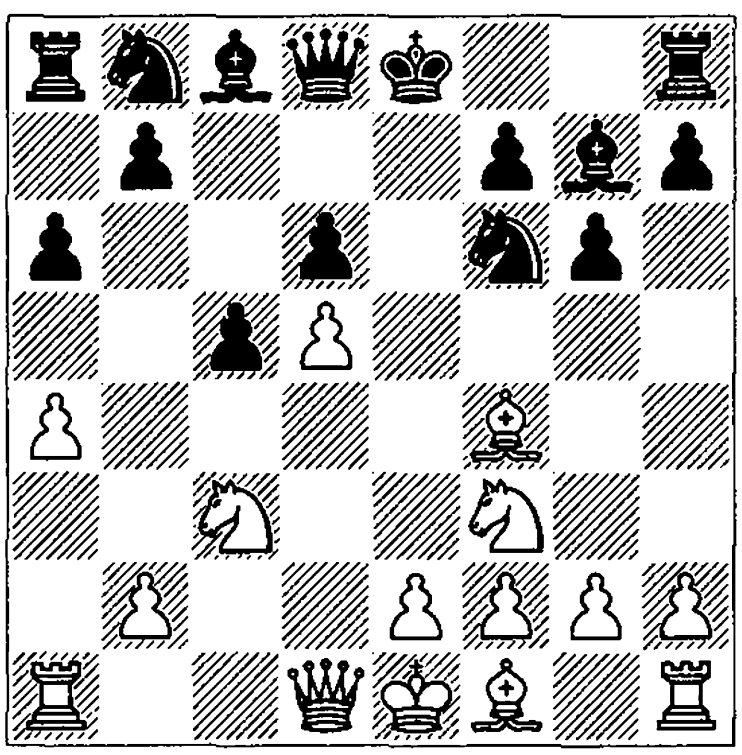
11...♗e7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘c4 ♗e7

The game is equal, Litinskaya-Prudnikova, USSR wom Ch 1986.

B212)

8 a4 ♗g7 *(D)*

Black can play 8...♕e7!? to prevent 9 e4 of the next note, but there's no need to do so.



W

9 h3

This restrained move may be the most difficult line for Black to meet. White preserves his bishop against ...♘h5 and plays for the simple e3 and ♘d2-c4. Others:

a) 9 e4 and now:

a1) After 9...0-0!?, 10 ♗e2 ♗g4 could follow, when 11 0-0 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 transposes to Line B112 of Chapter 9. 10 ♘d2 is treated very briefly in note 'c2' to White's 8th move in Line B22.

a2) However, much more ambitious (and probably better) is 9...♗g4! 10 ♕b3 (10 ♗e2 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 0-0 12 0-0 transposes to Line B112 of Chapter 9) 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xb7 ♘bd7 12 gxf3, when we have transposed to note 'c' to Black's 10th move in Line B113 of Chapter 9, which is perfectly satisfactory for Black.

b) 9 ♘d2 ♘h5 10 ♗e3 f5 11 ♘c4 (11 g3 ♘d7 12 ♘c4 ♘e5 =) 11...♕c7 (to meet 12 a5 with 12...♘d7) is safe and equal.

c) 9 e3 and now:

c1) 9...0-0 10 h3 transposes to the main line.

c2) 9...♗f5!? would be experimental; for example, 10 ♕b3!? (10 ♘d2 ♘h5 ∓) 10...♕c7!? 11 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 12 ♕xb7 0-0 13 ♕xa8 ♘e4 intending to meet 14 ♘d1 (14 ♖c1 ♕b6) by 14...c4 15 ♗e2 ♕b4+ 16 ♔f1 ♗xb2 17 ♖a2 c3 with good chances.

c3) 9...♗g4!? 10 ♕b3 (10 ♗e2 0-0 {10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 0-0} 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♘h5!) 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3!? (11 ♕xb7 ♘bd7 12 gxf3 ♖b8 13 ♕xa6 ♖xb2 is critical, as in line 'a2'; this would be a bit more solid for

White due to the trade-off e3 for e4) 11...♕c7 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♕xb7 ♘fd7!? 14 a5 0-0 15 ♕xa8 ♗xc3+ 16 bxc3 ♕f6 17 ♖c1 ♕xf3 18 ♖g1 ♘e5 19 ♗e2 ♕e4, Gunawan-Hulak, Sarajevo 1988. According to Psakhis, Black has a "strong attack".

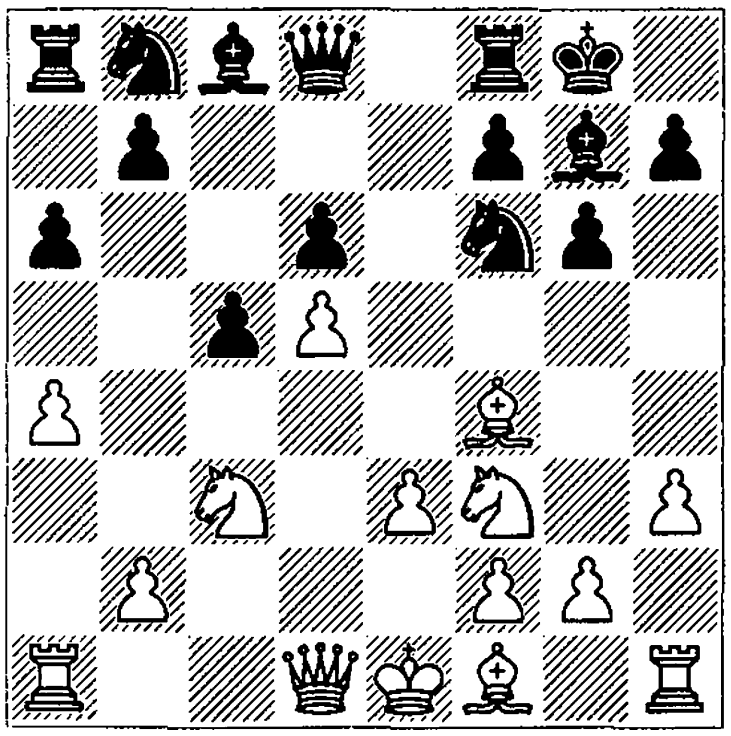
In any case, both 9...0-0 or 9...♗f5 are good options after 9 e3.

9...0-0

Now 9...♗f5 is pointless in view of 10 ♘d2!.

10 e3 *(D)*

Or 10 ♘d2 ♘e8 11 ♘c4 ♘d7! 12 ♗xd6 (12 ♘xd6?? ♘xd6 13 ♗xd6 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕f6 –+) 12...♘xd6 13 ♘xd6 ♕b6 14 ♘c4 ♕xb2! 15 ♘xb2 ♗xc3+ 16 ♕d2 ♗xd2+ 17 ♔xd2 ♘f6 ∓.

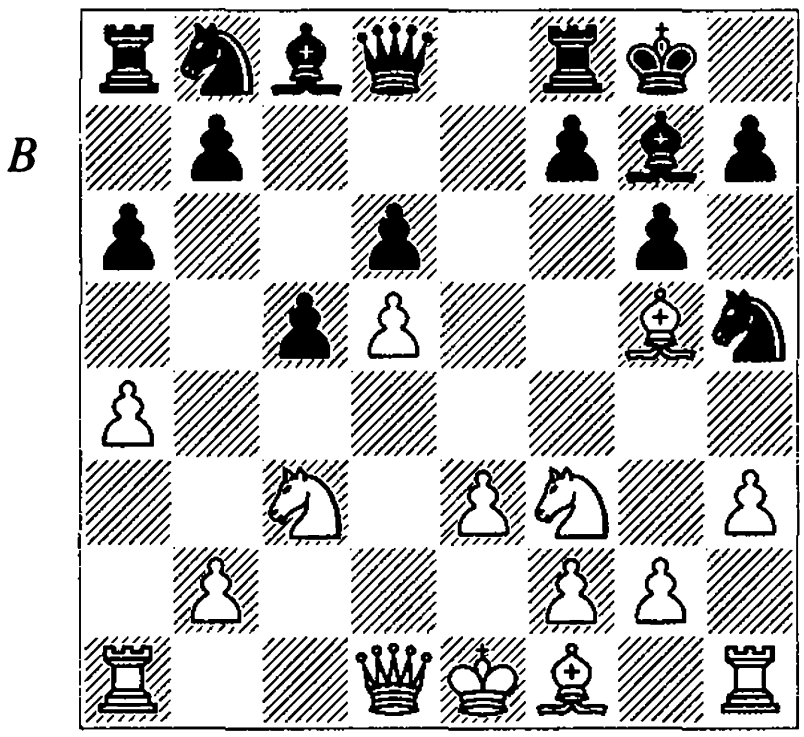


10...♘h5

Direct. Another possible course is 10...♕e7 11 ♗e2 (11 ♘d2 ♘h5 12 ♗h2 ♘d7 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 ∞) 11...♘bd7 (11...♖d8!? 12 ♘d2 ♘e8 13 ♘c4 ♘d7 14 0-0 b6) 12 ♘d2 ♖b8 13 0-0 ♘e8 14 ♗h2 f5 = Deshmucke-Marin, Calcutta 1999.

11 ♗g5 *(D)*

This is considered best, because 11 ♗h2 f5 intends to cut off the bishop and to attack e3 with ...f4: 12 ♗e2 (12 ♕d2 ♗h6!? {or 12...♕e7, now that ♘d2-c4 is no problem} 13 ♗d3 f4 14 0-0 ♘d7 15 ♖ae1 ♖b8 16 ♕c2 ♔g7 = Genov-Pigusov, Berlin 1992) 12...f4 13 e4 ♘d7 14 0-0. This can be met by 14...♔h8 and ...♖b8, as in Furman-Forintos, Oberhausen Echt 1961, or by 14...♕e7; e.g., 15 ♘d2 ♘e5 16 ♗xh5 gxh5 17 ♕xh5 ♗d7 (17...f3!? immediately also deserves consideration) with compensation, according to Barlov. Indeed, White is hard-pressed for a move; e.g., 18 a5 f3 (18...♖f6!?) 19 ♗xe5 (19 ♘xf3 ♗e8!) 19...fxg2 20 ♔xg2 ♗xe5 21 ♖g1 ♔h8 and Black is for choice.



11...♕b6!?

This move is untried and unsuggested, but may save the day. Otherwise:

a) 11...f6?! 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♘d2 is good for White, I.Sokolov-Ki.Georgiev, Groningen 1994.

b) 11...♕c7?! 12 ♗e2 (12 ♘d2!?) 12...f5 13 ♘d2 ♘f6 14 ♘c4 (Barlov) also favours White.

c) As is the case with the text-move, 11...♕a5!? is untried. Then 12 ♕c2 is met by 12...♖e8 13 ♘d2 ♗f5!, but 12 ♕d2 gains a tempo with the threat of 13 ♗e7, though 12...♖e8 13 g4 ♘f6 may be alright anyway.

12 ♕c2

Leaving room for ♘d2-c4. After 12 ♖b1, 12...h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♘d2 ♗f5! 15 e4 ♗g6 is equal.

12...h6! 13 g4

Or:

a) 13 a5 ♕c7 14 g4 ♘g3! 15 fxg3 hxg5 16 ♘xg5 ♕e7 is at least equal.

b) 13 ♗h4!? ♗f5! (13...g5 14 g4 is unclear) 14 e4?! (14 ♕d2 ♘f6 15 a5 ♕c7 =, intending ...♘e4) 14...♖e8 15 ♘d2 ♕b4 16 ♗d3 ♘f4 ∓. This would not have worked with the bishop on g5.

13...♘g3! 14 fxg3 hxg5 15 ♘xg5 ♗h6

Or 15...♕d8!? with the idea ...f5.

16 ♘ge4

16 h4 ♗xg4 17 a5 ♕d8 18 ♘e6!? ♕e7 19 ♘xf8 ♕xe3+, and while 20 ♘e2 holds on, I'd rather be Black.

16...♗xe3 17 ♘f6+ ♔g7 18 a5 ♕d8 19 ♘ce4 ♗d4 20 g5 ♗f5

Black's activity and bishops outweigh the temporary bind.

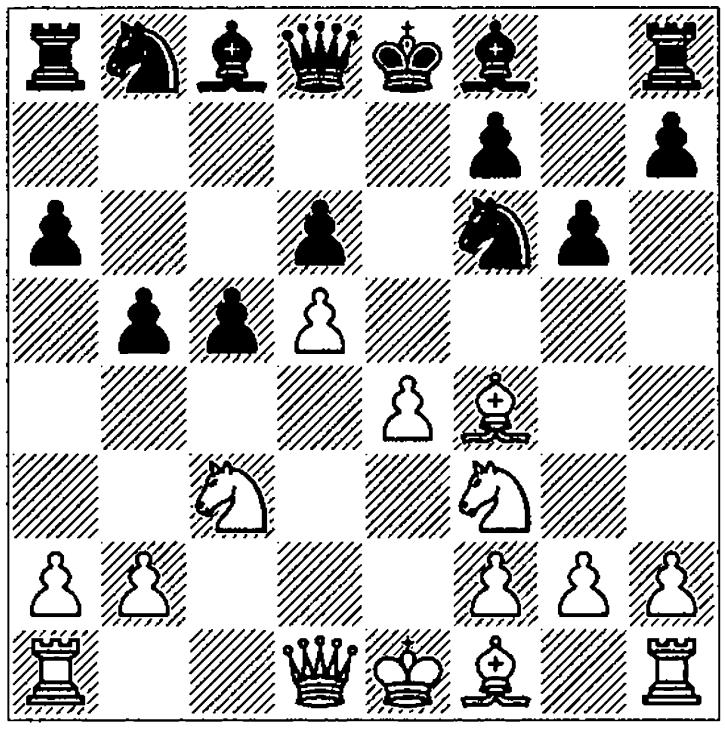
B213)

8 e4

Allowing Black to play ...b5 in order to undermine his central pawn-structure.

8...b5 *(D)*

If this seems too risky, 8...♕e7 has a solid reputation: 9 ♗e2 (9 ♕e2 ♘bd7 10 0-0-0 ♘g4!?; 9 e5 ♘bd7 is given by Kapengut, when 10 ♕e2 dxe5 11 ♘xe5 ♘h5 12 d6 ♕e6 looks fine for Black; 9 ♘d2 b5 10 ♗d3 ♗g7 11 0-0 0-0 is dynamically equal) 9...♘bd7 (9...♘xe4?? 10 ♕a4+) 10 0-0 ♗g7 (safer than 10...b5!? 11 ♗xb5!? axb5 12 ♘xb5, although that is unclear) 11 ♘d2 (11 a4 0-0 12 ♘d2 b6!? or 12...♘e5) 11...b5 ("unclear" – Kapengut). Now if White plays f3, ...♘h5 is effective, so Black has serious pressure on the e-pawn. Probably White should again play 12 ♗xb5! axb5 13 ♘xb5 ♖a6 14 ♘c7+ ♔f8 15 ♘xa6 ♗xa6 16 ♖e1 ♘h5 17 ♗e3 ♗xb2 18 ♖b1 ♗e5 19 ♕a4 ♗c8 20 ♗h6+ (20 ♘c4 ♔g7) 20...♗g7 21 ♗e3 ♗e5 with a repetition.



W

9 ♕e2

Other moves are considered satisfactory for Black:

a) The position after 9 ♘d2 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 0-0 can arise via a number of move-orders. 11 0-0 ♘e8 12 ♗g3

(versus ...f5, but Black plays it anyway; 12 ♕c2 f5 13 h3 g5!? 14 ♗h2 f4 = Anastasian-Moldobaev, Belgorod 1989) 12...f5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 ♗g4 ♘d7 = Safin-Gelfand, USSR jr Cht (Kramatorsk) 1989.

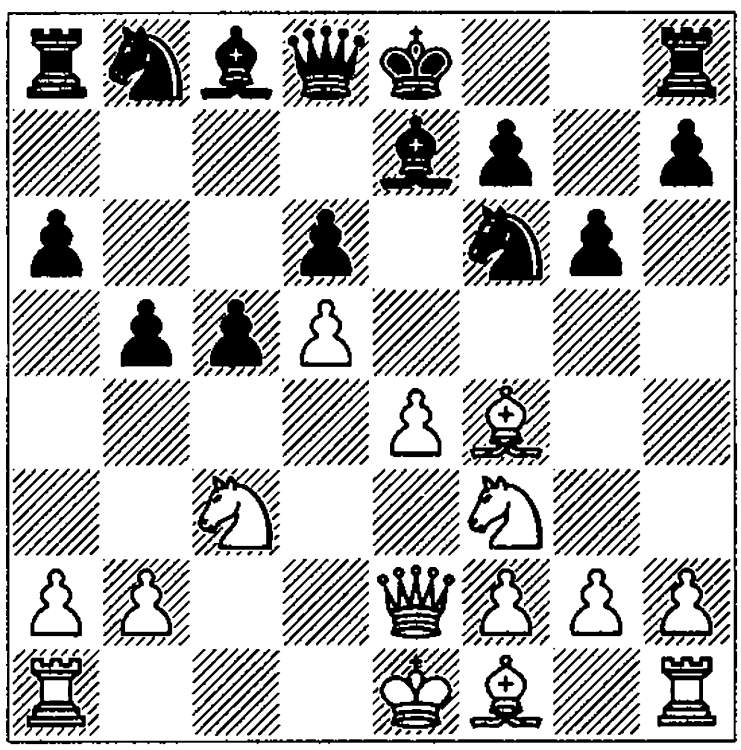
b) 9 ♕c2 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 (10 ♘d2 0-0 11 ♗e2 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♖a7 13 ♗f3 ♗g4 14 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 15 h3 ♘e5 = Forintos-Paavilainen, Tallinn 1986; 10 a4?! b4 11 ♘d1 0-0 12 ♗e2 ♕e7 13 ♘d2 ♖e8 14 0-0 ♘xe4 15 ♘c4, Kalentarian-Moldobaev, Blagoveshchensk 1988, and now 15...♗b7 16 ♗f3 ♕f6 or even 15...g5 looks strong) 10...0-0 11 0-0 ♖e8 12 a3!? (12 ♘d2 b4 13 ♘a4 ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♖xe2 15 ♕d3! is given as favouring White by Hébert, but 15...♖xd2! 16 ♕xd2 ♗d7 can hardly be bad) 12...b4 (12...♖a7, with the idea ...♖ae7, and 12...♗g4 are sound alternatives) 13 axb4 cxb4 14 ♘b5 ♖xe4 15 ♗g3 b3! 16 ♕d3 ♗f8 17 ♘fd4 ♗b7 is unclear, Abarca Aguirre-Klinger, Kiljava jr Wch 1984.

c) 9 ♗d3 ♗g4!? (9...♗g7) 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 is solid for Black, as usual in these ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3 lines: 11...♗g7 (interesting is 11...♘bd7 12 0-0 ♘e5!?) 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖fe1 ♘e8!? 14 a4 b4 15 ♘d1 ♘d7 16 ♕e2 (16 ♖e2 ♗d4! 17 ♕g3?! ♘e5 ∓ Kallai-Foisor, Val Thorens 1987) 16...a5 17 ♗c4 ♖a7 is perhaps slightly better for White, Liogky-Levin, Nikolaev 1987. Black would like to get moves like ...♘b6 and ...♖ae7 in.

d) 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5 ♗d6 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♕c7 (12...♖e8 13 ♘c6 ♘xc6 14 ♗xd6 ♘d4 = Kapengut) 13 ♗f3 ♖e8 (13...b4!? 14 ♘a4 ♘bd7) 14 ♘g4 ♗xg4 15 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♗xg4 and now 16...♘bd7 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 ♕f3 ♔g7 was equal in Zielinski-Jaworski, Bielsko-Biala 1990, but 16...♖a7! (to capture on d7 with the rook, or to double) looks quite good; e.g., 17 ♕f3 (17 ♗f3 ♘bd7 18 ♖e1 ♘e5 19 ♖c1 ♖ae7) 17...b4 18 ♘a4 ♖ae7 19 ♖ac1 ♖e4! 20 ♗h3 c4 and the d-pawn will fall.

9...♗e7 *(D)*

Not 9...♗g7?? 10 ♗xd6! ♕xd6 11 e5 ♕e7 12 d6, etc.



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A truly remarkable position, which illustrates the resilience of the Benoni. When White first realized that he could force this position, he must have thought: 'That's the end of 7...a6!'. White has a large lead in development, the prospect of 0-0-0, and deadly-looking attacking ideas involving e5 and if ...dxe5, d6. Black's bishop is on the 'wrong' square e7, and White even has notions of ♗h6 at some point, preventing Black from castling! But in fact, White seldom even enters into this position any more, which is a

tribute to the defensive powers conferred by Black's pawn-structure.

10 ♕c2

A rather tame move, but perhaps best. Having provoked Black's bishop to e7 instead of g7, White loses a tempo in order to develop. Instead, 10 ♗h6?! is useless in view of 10...♘g4, but the alternatives produce some very entertaining play:

a) 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 h3 (11 e5 ♘g4! 12 ♘e4 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘d7 15 ♗f4 ♖e8 = Alburt-D.Gurevich, USA Ch (Estes Park) 1986) 11...♖e8 12 ♕c2 ♗f8 and Black looks fine; e.g., 13 e5?! dxe5 14 ♘xe5?? ♗d6 0-1 Ra.Garcia-Psakhis, Andorra 1997, since 15 ♘d3 c4 is winning for Black.

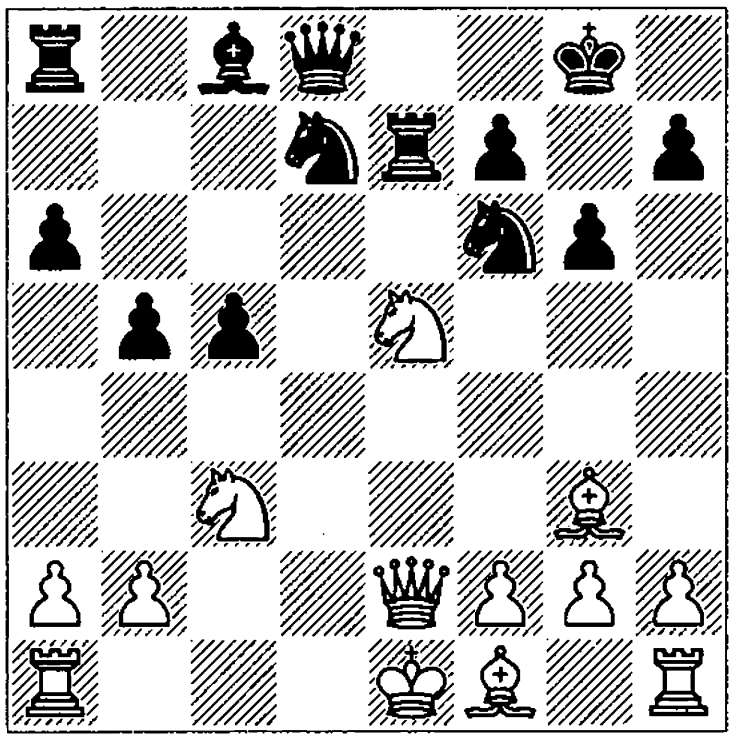
b) 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♘bd7 and now:

b1) 12 d6 ♘xe5 13 dxe7 ♘xf3+ ∓.

b2) 12 ♗d6 ♔f8 ∓ Kapengut. The point is that White's d-pawn becomes weak.

b3) 12 0-0-0 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕d6 14 ♘c6 ♔f8 (this is likely ∓, due to the weak d-pawn) 15 g3 (15 h3 ♕f4+ 16 ♖d2 ♗d6 17 g3 ♕f5 18 ♕e3 ♔g7 and Black connects his rooks, Lundin-Ilić, Lugano 1985; 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 d6 ♕xe2 17 ♗xe2 ♗b7 18 ♗f3 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♔g7 ∓ Milovanović-Hulak, Pula 1990) 15...♗f5 (15...♗b7 is also played) 16 ♗g2 ♖e8 17 ♖he1 ♗d8! 18 ♕d2 ♔g7 19 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 20 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 21 h3 h5 22 ♕g5 ♖e8 23 ♕d2 b4 24 ♘e2 ♘e4 with a strong attack, H.Pedersen-Emms, Esbjerg 1996.

b4) 12 ♗g3 0-0 13 d6 ♖e8 14 dxe7 ♖xe7 15 ♘e5 *(D)* and now:

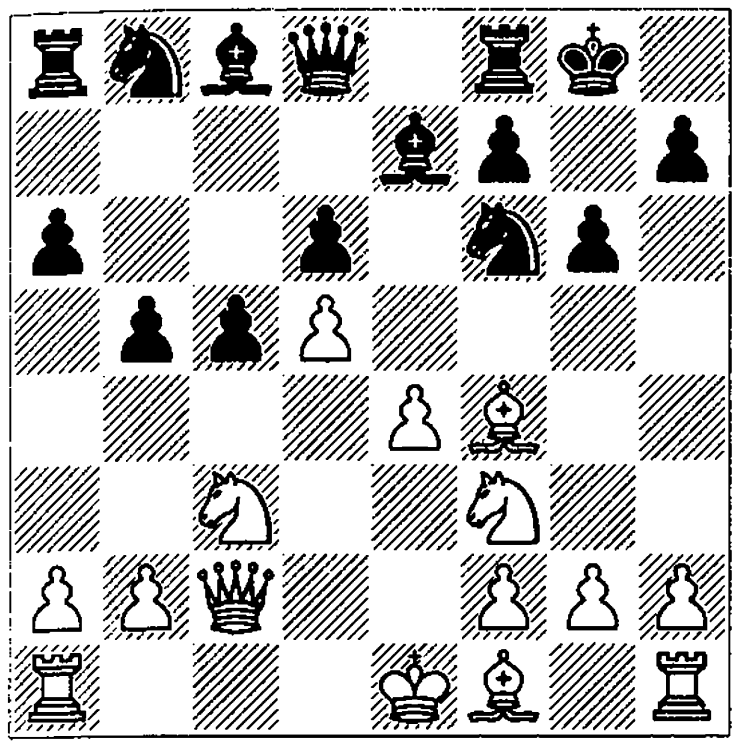


B

b41) This widely-quoted line from Ilić's analysis concludes with the move 15...b4'!'. However, after 16 ♘e4!, White seems to have a great game. Since 16...♘xe4 17 ♘c6! is bad for Black, he probably has to try 16...♖xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♖d1 ♕e7, when after 19 ♘d6 ♗g4 20 f3 ♗h5 (20...♖d8 21 ♘c4) 21 ♘c4 ♖e8 22 ♘xe5 ♕c7 23 ♔f2 the attack is finished.

b42) So 15...♘xe5! must be correct; e.g., 16 ♗xe5 b4 17 ♖d1 (17 ♘d1 ♘d7 {17...♘d5!?} 18 f4 f6 19 ♕f3 ♖a7 20 ♗c4+ ♔h8 is messy, but is probably better for Black) 17...♕a5 (17...♕e8!?) 18 ♗xf6 (18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♗b7 ∓) 18...♖xe2+ 19 ♘xe2 ♗f5 (19...♗b7!? 20 h4! ♕xa2 21 h5 ♕e6 22 ♗g5 is unclear) 20 ♘g3 (20 ♘c1? b3+ 21 ♗c3 bxa2 22 ♗xa5 a1♕ 23 ♗c3 ♗c2 −+) 20...♕xa2 21 ♗e2 (21 ♘xf5?! gxf5! 22 f4 ♖e8+ 23 ♔f2 c4 24 ♗e2 c3 ∓) 21...♕e6 22 ♗g5 ♗c2 23 ♖d2 b3 intending ...♕e5 and ...♕xb2 and you have to like Black's position.

10...0-0 *(D)*



11 ♗e2

11 a4 b4 12 ♘b1 (12 ♘d1 b3! 13 ♕c4 ♘bd7 gives Black the initiative, Flear-Renet, Hastings 1987/8) 12...♖e8 (12...♘h5 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 yielded satisfactory positions in two of Wedberg's games as Black against Yakovich; still more aggressive is 12...b3!? 13 ♕xb3 ♘xe4 14 ♗d3 ♘f6 15 0-0 ♘bd7 16 ♘c3 ♖b8 17 ♕a2 ♖e8 = Damaso-de Firmian, Lisbon 2000) 13 ♗d3 ♗f8 14 0-0, Yakovich-Totsky, St Petersburg 1994, and now Psakhis recommends simply 14...♘bd7 =, but 14...b3 may also suffice.

11...♖e8

11...♗g4 is also sufficient for equality.

12 ♘d2

To stop ...♘h5 and ...♗g4.

12...♗f8 13 0-0 b4!?

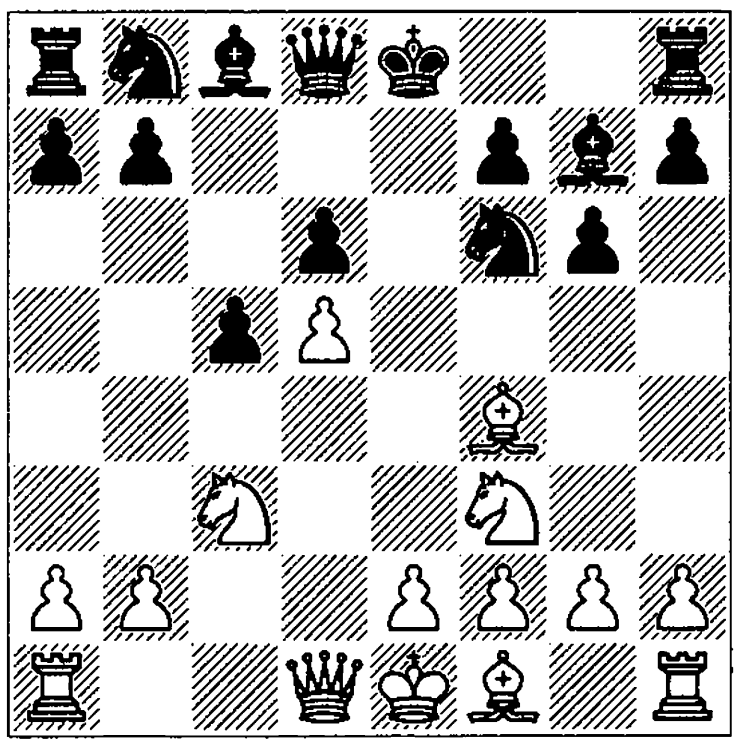
13...♘bd7 14 ♖fe1 ♖b8 = was Flear-Schulte, Oakham 1988, which saw the interesting strategy 15 b3 ♘e5 16 a4 b4 17 ♘d1 ♘h5!? 18 ♗xh5 gxh5 19 ♘b2 ♘g6 ½-½. Black has active play; e.g., 20 ♗e3 ♗g7 21 ♖ab1 h4 22 h3 ♗c3 23 ♘bc4 ♕f6 24 ♖ed1 ♘f4.

14 ♘d1 ♘xd5 15 exd5 ♖xe2 16 ♗e3

Now the black rook is trapped, but Black will get two active bishops and a pawn for the exchange: 16...a5 17 ♕d3 ♗a6 18 ♘c4 ♕h4 19 ♖c1 ♖xe3 20 ♘dxe3 ♘d7 21 ♕d1 f5 22 ♖e1 ♘f6 23 ♕f3 ♘e4 24 ♘xa5!? ♗g7 25 ♘ec4 ♗d4! and now, instead of 26 ♖c2?? ♗xc4 27 ♘xc4 ♘xf2! winning for Black, S.Schneider-de Firmian, Copenhagen 1999, White has to try 26 g3 ♘g5! 27 ♕g2 (27 ♕e2 ♕h6 28 ♖f1 ♘h3+ 29 ♔g2 ♘xf2 ∓) 27...♕h5 28 ♔h1, when 28...♗xc4 29 ♘xc4 ♖xa2 30 ♘xd6 ♖xb2 31 ♖e8+ ♔g7 32 ♖e7+ ♔h6!? (32...♔f8 =) maintains a few chances for Black, although White should reach full equality.

B22)

7...♗g7 *(D)*



This is our second, more ambitious, repertoire choice. I believe that 7...♗g7 is perfectly sound, but it is probably more difficult to play than 7...a6 and requires a lot of understanding.

8 ♕a4+

Easily the most important move. Notice that 8 e4 0-0 9 ♘d2 transposes to note 'c'. If White doesn't play 8 ♕a4+, the move 7...♗g7 shows its virtues by saving a tempo and being less weakening than 7...a6:

a) 8 e3 (not even mentioned in *ECO*) 8...0-0 9 h3 ♘e8 (easiest) 10 ♗e2 ♘d7 11 0-0 ♘e5 12 ♗xe5 (12 ♘d2 f5! =; 12 ♕c2 ♘xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 a6 14 a4 ♖b8 intending ...b5, followed by ...♗d7 if necessary) 12...dxe5 (this pawn-structure tends to favour White if ...a6 and a4 are thrown in, but here it is very solid) 13 ♘d2, and now 13...♘d6 (the ideal blockader) 14 ♕b3 b6 = seems more accurate than 13...f5 14 ♕b3, Tal-Spassky, USSR jr Ch (Leningrad) 1954.

b) 8 h3 0-0 9 ♘d2 ♘e8 10 ♘c4 is almost the same as the note to White's 10th move in Line B212: 10...♘d7! 11 ♗xd6 (11 ♘xd6?? ♘xd6 12 ♗xd6 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♕f6 −+) 11...♘xd6 12 ♘xd6 ♕b6 13 ♘c4 ♕xb2! 14 ♘xb2 ♗xc3+ 15 ♕d2 ♗xd2+ 16 ♔xd2 ♘f6 ∓.

c) 8 ♘d2 0-0 (simpler than 8...♘h5 9 ♕a4+ ♔f8 10 ♗e3 a6, which is dynamically equal) 9 e4 (a relatively harmless position which can be arrived at with a variety of move-orders; 9 ♘c4 is the Knight's Tour Variation of Chapter 4) and then:

c1) 9...♘g4 10 ♗e2 (10 ♘c4? ♗d4! 11 ♗g3 f5!) 10...♘e5 11 0-0 f5 is one way to equalize.

c2) 9...a6 10 a4 and now 10...♘h5 11 ♗e3 f5!? (11...♘d7 12 ♗e2 ♘e5!? 13 0-0 ♕h4) 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 g4 ♗d4! is wild and unclear, Strangmüller-Krausner, Germany 1992. For those with attacking inclinations, I would direct your attention to 10...♘g4 (as in line 'c1') intending to meet 11 ♘c4? with 11...♗d4! – this idea is playable with or without the inclusion of ...a6 and a4.

c3) 9...♘e8 10 ♗e2 f5 11 exf5 (else ...g5 and ...f4) 11...♗xf5 12 ♗g3 ♘d7 13 0-0 ♘e5 14 ♘de4 a6 15 a4 ♖b8 16 ♖e1 ♘c7 17 a5 b5 = Gavrikov-de Firmian, Biel 1995. Then 18 axb6 ♖xb6 would be a typical example of pressure down the b-file.

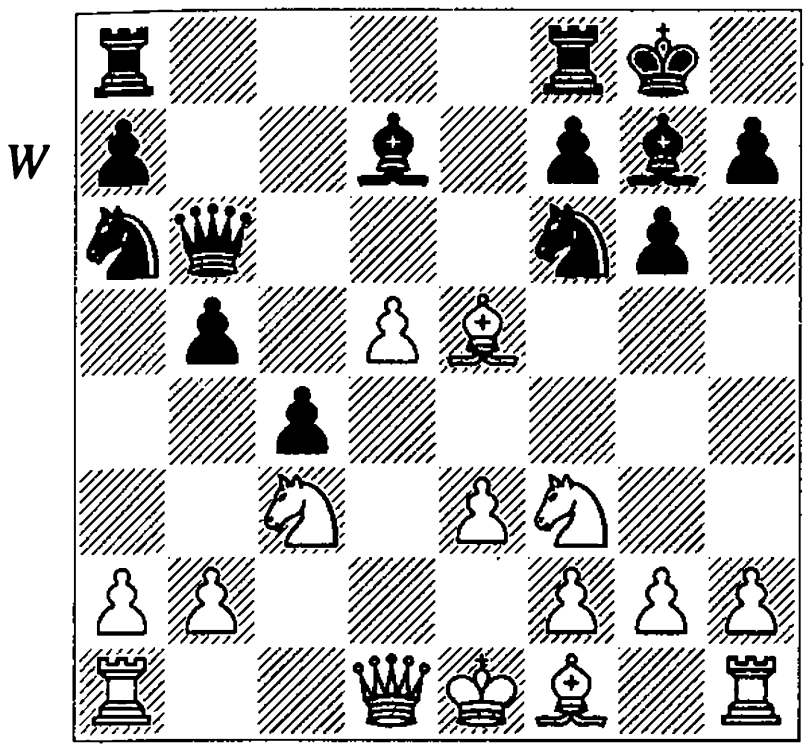
8...♗d7 9 ♕b3

9 ♕c2 0-0 10 e4 (10 ♗xd6? ♗f5 11 e4 ♖e8 ∓ 12 0-0-0 ♗h6+ 13 ♘d2 ♗xe4!) 10...♕e7 11 ♗e2 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 b5! 13 0-0 a6 (13...b4 14 ♘b5 ♘xe4 15 ♖ae1!) 14 ♗f3?! (14 ♖fe1 b4 15 ♘d1 ♗b5 =) 14...b4 ∓ Herzog-Klinger, Zug 1985. Black intends ...♗b5 followed by ...♘bd7.

9...♕c7

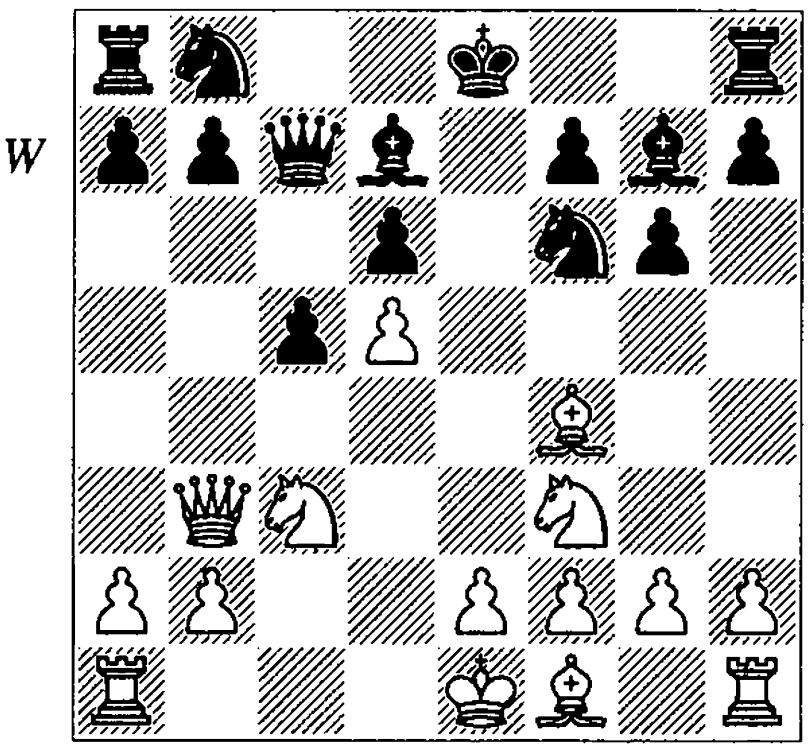
This is the older, less recommended move, but I think it holds the balance. By contrast, after the popular sacrifice 9...b5 (which Kapengut calls the "modern alternative"), I think that 10 ♗xd6! is favourable to White (10 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 11 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 12 ♗xd6 ♘e4 13 ♗e5 0-0 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♕a4 ♖b8!! 16 ♕xe4 ♖xb2 is an amazing sacrifice which is still holding up well). The crucial line is 10...♕b6 (10...c4 11 ♕d1 ♕b6 12 ♗e5 b4 13 ♘b1! ± *ECO*) 11 ♗e5 0-0 12 e3 c4 13 ♕d1 (13 ♕b4!? goes unmentioned) 13...♘a6 *(D)* '!', according to all Benoni sources, who agree

that the alternatives for Black are weaker.



Here I think the major theoreticians are much too kind to Black, giving him full equality. The only sceptical voice is David Norwood (normally optimistic for Black), who comments: "Although some Benoni players are very happy to play this variation, I have a deep suspicion that it is not entirely sound for Black. White should be able to keep the pawn and emerge with a reasonable position." I agree, and thus cannot recommend 9...b5. For those interested, some places to begin looking are 14 ♖c1, to answer ...b4 with ♘b1, 14 ♗e2 (underrated), and even the main line: 14 ♕d4 ♖fc8'!' 15 ♖c1 b4 16 ♘b1! (previously 16 ♘d1 was played), a sample line being 16...♕xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♘xd5 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♗xc4 ♘b6 20 ♘d2 ♘c5 21 0-0 ♘xc4 22 ♘xc4 ♘d3 23 ♖c2 a5 24 ♖d2 ♖xc4 25 ♖xd3 and White has a clear advantage.

We now return to the position after 9...♕c7 *(D)*:



10 h3

The main move is 10 e4, which we will take up in the next section (Line C) via 6 e4 g6 7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+, etc. The only other serious alternative is 10 ♘d2 ♘h5, and now:

a) Once again, 11 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 12 ♕xb7 is messy. I think Black should be OK after something like 12...♕b6 13 ♕xa8 0-0 14 ♘c4 ♕b4 15 ♖c1 ♕xc4 16 ♕xa7 .♗xc3+ 17 ♖xc3 ♕xd5 18 e3 ♖e8 19 ♖xc5 ♕e4 20 ♖c1 ♘f4 with the initiative.

b) 11 ♗g5 (the book move) 11...h6 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♗g3 ♘xg3 14 hxg3 a6 (or 14...0-0) 15 a4 ♗f5 16 ♘c4 ♘d7 17 a5 0-0 18 ♘a4 ♖ae8! with equal play, Sturua-Eolian, Erevan 1982. This is an example of the common phenomenon in which a knight on b6 will be stranded away from the action.

10 h3 is a deceptive move which is supposed to be somewhat better for White. Fortunately, since White plays rather slowly with moves like ♕a4-b3, h3 and e3, Black has time to develop rapidly:

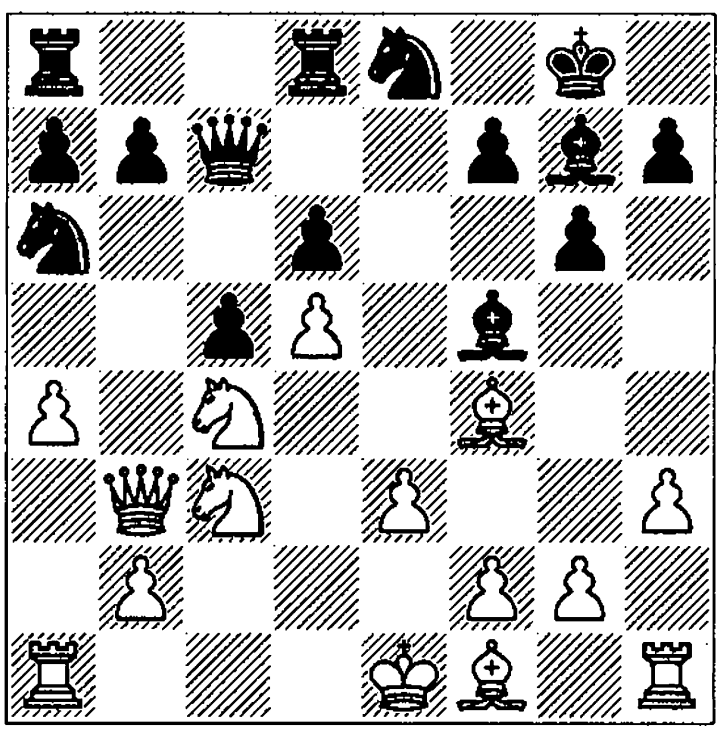
10...0-0 11 e3 ♘a6

Black develops as quickly as possible, additionally clearing his first rank.

12 ♘d2 ♖ab8

The move which has been played, but it does cost a tempo. I think a good alternative which illustrates Black's counterplay is 12...♖fd8 13 ♘c4 ♘e8 14 a4 ♗f5!? *(D)*.

W



For example: 15 g4?! (15 ♗e2 ♕e7 16 ♘d2 g5 17 ♗h2 ♘f6 18 0-0 ♘b4 =) 15...♗xc3+! (15...♗c8 is equal) 16 bxc3 (16 ♕xc3 ♗e4 17 ♖g1 ♗xd5) 16...♗e4 17 ♖g1 ♗xd5 18 ♖d1 ♗f3 ∓.

13 a4

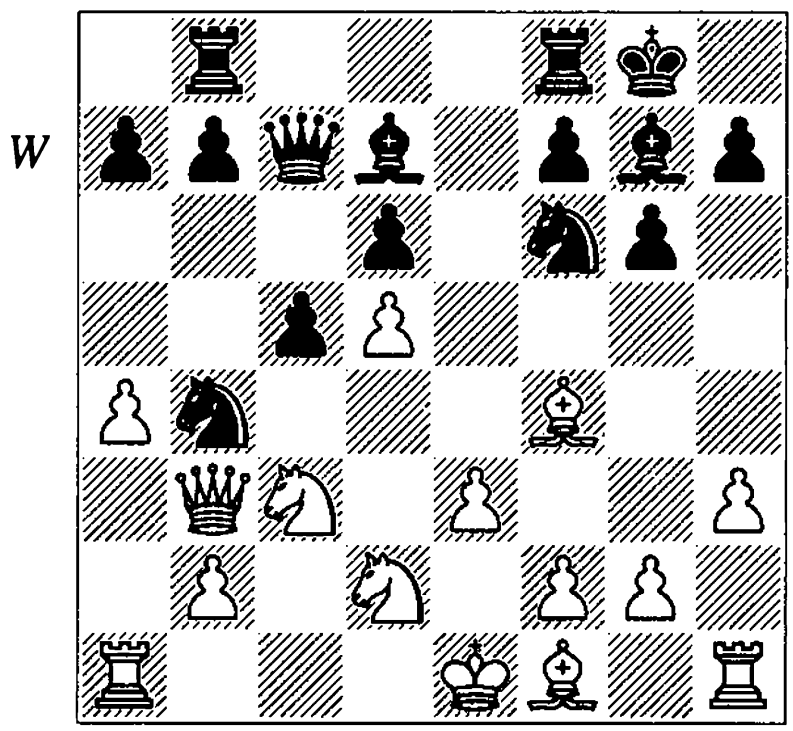
13 ♘c4 ♘e8 14 ♘e4 (14 a4 ♘b4 transposes to the main line) 14...b5! 15 ♘cxd6 ♕a5+ 16 ♘c3 ♖b6 17 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 and Black has all kinds of play involving ...b4 and ...♗a4 or ...c4.

13...♘b4 *(D)*

14 ♘c4

ECO gives 14 ♗e2 as slightly better for White, but 14...♘e8 looks satisfactory: 15 0-0 (15 ♘b5 ♗xb5 16 axb5 ♘f6 and now 17 ♘c4 ♖fd8 =, or 17 ♗f3 ♖fd8 18 0-0 a6 19 ♖fc1 ♕e7 20 b6 ♘d7 21 ♘c4 ♗e5! =; 15 ♘c4

W



♗xc3+!? and 16...♘xd5) 15...a6 16 a5 (16 ♘ce4!? b5 17 axb5 ♗xb5 18 ♗xb5 ♖xb5 19 ♖xa6!? ♕b7 20 ♖xd6 f5; 16 ♖fc1 b6 17 ♘ce4 ♕d8 18 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 19 ♗xd6 ♗xa4 20 ♖xa4 ♕xd6 is equal) 16...b6! 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 ♘c4 ♖b8 with dynamically balanced play.

14...♘e8 15 ♖d1 a6 16 a5 ♗f5

I am suggesting this because I don't like 16...♗b5?! 17 ♘xb5 axb5 18 ♘b6 ♖a8! 19 ♘xa8 ♕xa5, Velichko-Peresypkin, USSR 1984. This is given as unclear in the books, and in fact Black won the game, but this is hard to believe. For example, Bangiev gives 20 ♖d2 g5 ('!'; 20...c4 21 ♗xc4) 21 ♗xg5 ♘f6, yet 22 ♘c7 ♕xc7 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♗xb5 ♕a5 25 ♗e2 leaves Black short.

17 e4

Black keeps things level after 17 ♖d2 ♕e7! 18 ♗e2 ♖d8 19 0-0 g5 20 ♗h2 ♘f6; e.g., 21 g4 ♗g6 22 f4 gxf4 (or 22...♘e4) 23 ♗xf4 ♘e4 =.

17...♕e7 18 ♘xd6?!

Better is 18 f3 ♗d7 19 ♗e2 ♗b5 20 0-0 f5 with equality, in view of 21

♘xb5 axb5 22 ♘d2 and now 22...♘c7 or 22...g5 and ...f4.

18...♘xd6 19 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 20 exf5 b5!

Introducing a typical trade-off of a-file for b-file.

21 axb6

Giving up a piece by 21 fxg6 c4 22 gxh7+ ♔h8 23 ♗xc4 bxc4 24 ♕xc4 offers White no relief after 24...♖fc8 25 ♕g4 ♗xc3+ 26 bxc3 ♕e5+ 27 ♔f1 ♘xd5.

21...♖xb6

Also reasonable is 21...♕xb6 22 ♕a4 (22 ♗c4 ♘d3+! 23 ♖xd3 ♕xb3 24 ♗xb3 ♖xb3) 22...♖fe8+ 23 ♗e2 ♗d4 24 fxg6 hxg6.

22 ♘a4 ♖e8+ 23 ♗e2 ♖b7 24 fxg6

White's problem is that he can't get castled; 24 ♖d2 ♖be7 leads to similar play.

24...♖be7 25 gxf7+ ♔xf7 26 ♖d2 ♗h6! 27 f4 ♗xf4 28 0-0 ♔g7

White has serious problems.

Apparently Black maintains the balance after 10 h3. Aside from the main line above, his alternative on move 12 should be taken seriously.

To conclude, both 7...a6 and 7...♗g7 are satisfactory answers to 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4, which is White's most popular ♗f4 system. 7...a6 is probably the safer choice, in that it prevents the ♕a4+ manoeuvre and, incidentally, avoids the play that follows in the next section. Nevertheless, 7...♗g7 may create a type of tactical environment that appeals more to one's taste.

C)

6 e4 g6 7 ♗f4

Here White delays ♘f3 for a while, and thus avoids some of Black's early ...♗g4 ideas.

7...♗g7

It may be possible to play 7...a6 and try to transpose to Line B1 of Chapter 9, but I'm not sure about the unique position after 8 ♕a4+!? ♗d7 9 ♕c2!?, since ...a6, ...♗d7 and ...b5 do not go together so well here. Still, this is not completely clear and worth investigating. There could follow 9...♕e7 (9...b5 10 ♘f3 ♕e7 11 0-0-0 b4 12 ♘b1 ±) and then:

a) 10 ♘f3 ♗g7 (10...b5 11 e5 dxe5 {11...♘h5 12 ♘e4 ♗f5 13 ♕c3} 12 0-0-0 exf4 13 ♖e1 ♗e6 14 ♘g5 is very messy, but ultimately seems better for White) 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘h5 14 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 15 ♗e3 b5 16 ♗e2 ♘hf6 17 h4!? ±.

b) 10 0-0-0!? ♘h5 11 ♗e3 ♗g7 12 ♗e2 ♘f6 (12...0-0? 13 ♗xh5 gxh5 14 ♘f3 f5 15 ♗g5 ♕f7 16 ♖he1 ±) 13 ♘f3 ±.

8 ♕a4+

Or:

a) After 8 ♘f3 0-0, 9 ♘d2 transposes to note 'c' to White's 8th move in Line B22, while 9 ♗e2 a6 10 a4 ♗g4 11 0-0 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 transposes to Line B112 of Chapter 9, and 9 h3? is note 'a' to White's 9th move in Line B2 of Chapter 9.

b) 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 9 ♗e2 should be met by 9...♕e7 10 ♘f3 (10 ♕c2 ♘a6 Hébert) 10...0-0 (10...♘xe4!? 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 12 ♗xd6 ♕b4+! 13 ♔f1 ♕b6 could be tried) 11 0-0 ♗g4 (here 11...♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 13 ♗xd6 ♗a4! is equal) 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2

♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 = Spassov-Ermenkov, Albena 1975.

8...♗d7 9 ♕b3

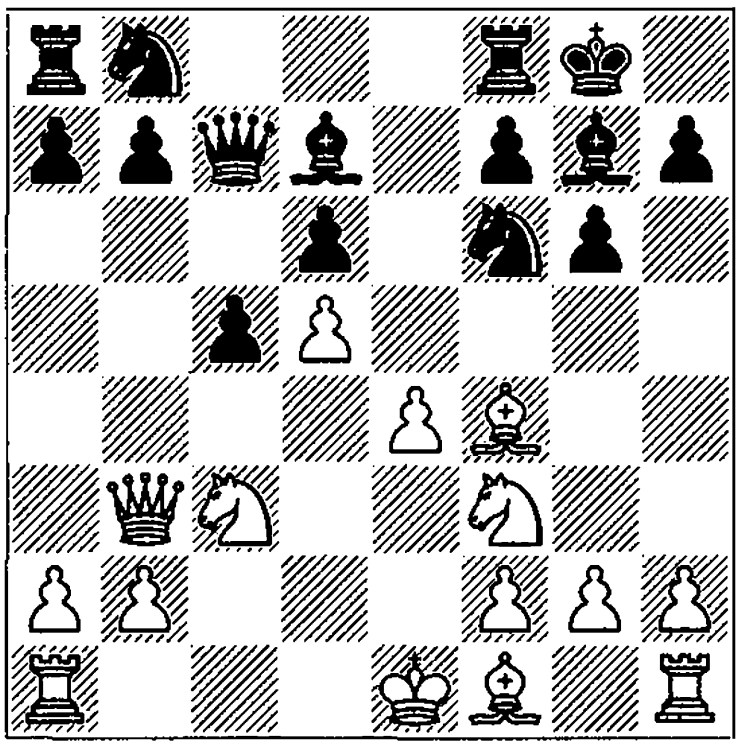
Now 9 ♕c2 ♕e7 puts immediate pressure on the e-pawn (by contrast, see the note to White's 9th move in Line B22, i.e. 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕c2).

9...♕c7 10 ♘f3

Not 10 ♗xd6? ♕xd6 11 ♕xb7 ♕b6 12 ♕xa8 ♕xb2 ∓.

The text-move brings us to an important position that could have arisen via 10 e4 in Line B22.

10...0-0 *(D)*



11 ♘d2!

This probably poses the most problems. Others are intriguing, but only equal:

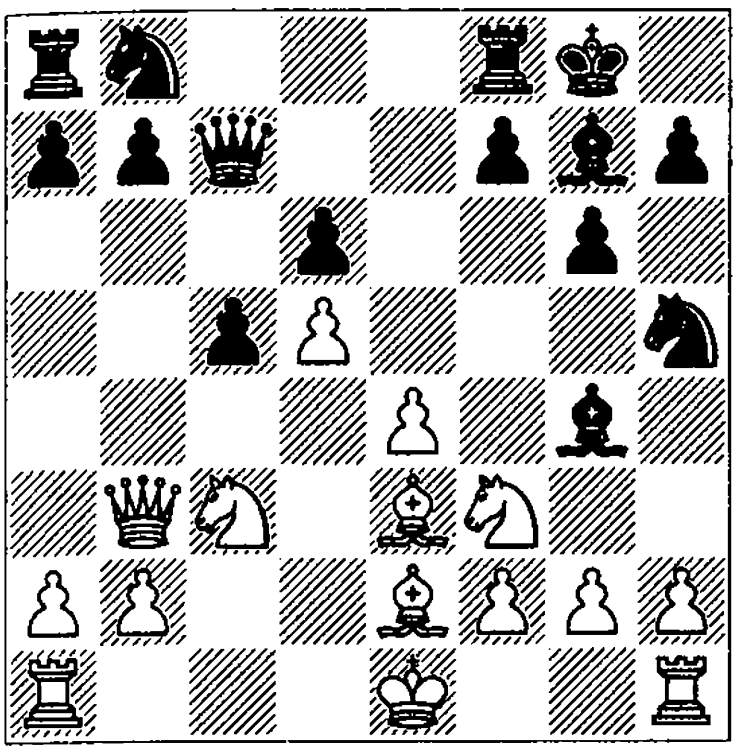
a) 11 ♗d3 a6 (11...♘h5 12 ♗e3 ♘a6!? would compare interestingly with the 11 ♘d2 main line) 12 a4 ♘h5 13 ♗e3 ♗g4!? 14 ♘d2 ♘d7 15 h3 (15 f3 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♗d7; 15 0-0 ♘e5 16 ♗b1 c4 17 ♕a3 ♗d7 18 h3 f5! ∓ Kapengut; an exaggeration, but Black has enough play) 15...♘e5 16 ♗f1 ♗d7 17 g4 (17 f4 ♘g3) 17...f5! (just in time, and justifying the position of the knights on h5 and e5) 18 gxh5 (18 f4 ♘g3 19 fxe5 ♘xh1 20 e6 f4 is 'unclear' according to Kapengut; in fact, 21 ♗g1 f3 22 ♘d1 ♗e8 probably favours Black) 18...f4 19 hxg6 (19 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 20 hxg6 hxg6 looks unclear, with dark-square pressure for the pawn) 19...hxg6 20 0-0-0 fxe3 21 fxe3 b5! Kapengut. Black's knight is a giant on e5 and his queenside attack is menacing.

b) 11 h3 ♖e8 (11...b5!? Kuligowski; then 12 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 13 ♕xb5 is critical) 12 ♘d2 ♘xe4 13 ♘cxe4 f5 with active play; e.g., 14 0-0-0 (14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♕xb7 fxe4 16 ♘c4 ♕f4 17 ♗e2 {17 ♕xa8 ♖f8!} 17...♗d4! with the idea that 18 0-0 is met by 18...♗xh3) 14...fxe4 15 ♘c4 b5 16 ♘xd6 ♖f8 17 ♗g3 c4 18 ♕c2 ♕a5 19 ♔b1 ♘a6 ∓; e.g., 20 a3 ♘c5.

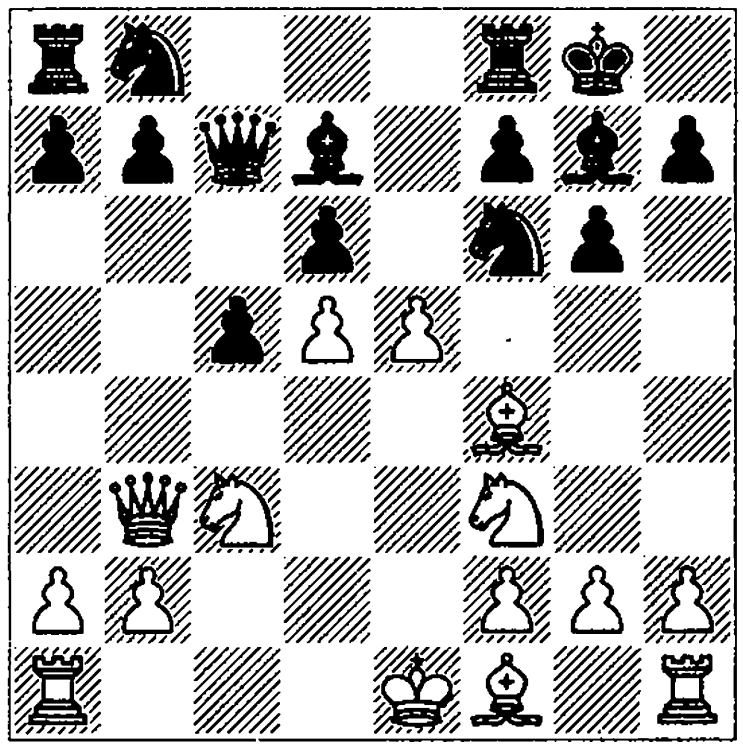
c) 11 ♗e2 gives Black a broad choice of moves. Now the books offer two moves that are theoretically adequate. 11...b5 has been successful, but it also requires lengthy and tactically complex analysis. Since 11 ♗e2 isn't seen much, I'd rather recommend the somewhat easier 11...♘h5 12 ♗e3 ♗g4 *(D)* (it's worth mentioning that 12...a6 has also been successful, meeting 13 ♘d2 with 13...b5; in that case 13 a4 allows an improved version of the text after 13...♗g4) and now:

c1) 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘d7!? 15 ♗xh5 gxh5 is the typical trade-off of black dynamism for a weakened pawn-structure. Now 16 0-0?! is frowned upon by theory due to Black's

W



B



activity following 16...f5!, and 16 ♕d1 f5 17 ♕xh5 f4 18 ♗d2 ♘e5 19 0-0 ♖f6 is also undesirable. So in Timman-Ljubojević, Amsterdam 1972, White continued 16 ♕c2 ♖ae8 17 0-0 a6 18 a4 ♕d8 (18...♘e5!?) 19 a5!? ♔h8 20 ♖a4 ♕c8 21 ♘d1 (Kapengut gives 21 ♕e2 f5 22 ♕xh5 f4 with compensation) 21...b5 22 axb6 ♘xb6 23 ♖a2 f5 =.

c2) 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♘hf6 (15...a6 16 ♗xh5 gxh5 is similar to line 'c1') 16 a4 a6 17 a5 (17 ♗e2 ♖fc8!? intending ...c4 – Kapengut; 17 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 18 ♗f4 b6 is modest but sensible for Black, contemplating a combination of ...♘e5, ...c4, ...♖ab8 and ...b5) 17...♖fb8 18 ♖a2 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 = Salov-Psakhis, Moscow 1986. The game continued 20 ♕c2 ♘e8 21 ♗e2 ♕d8 (intending ...♘c7-b5) 22 f4 ♕e7 23 ♗f3 ♖ab8 24 ♗f2 ♘c7 25 ♖e1, and here Psakhis likes 25...♘b5 =.

d) After 11 e5 *(D)* there has been some strange analysis:

d1) For example, after 11...♜e8, held to be equal, everyone follows Ubilava-Basin, Tbilisi 1983, but after 12 0-0-0 ♘h5 13 exd6 ♕a5 14 ♗d2 that game continued 14...♘a6, although White has simply 15 ♕xb7! and where's the compensation? If 15...♘b4, White can successfully capture on d7, but he also has 16 ♗c4!. Kapengut suggests 14...♕b4, but 15 ♕xb4 cxb4 16 ♘b5 looks very strong (16...♘a6 17 ♘c7!).

d2) 11...♘h5 could be adequate, but again, there's a flaw in the main line after 12 exd6 (12 ♗e3!? dxe5 13 0-0-0 ♗g4!? appears safe enough) 12...♖e8+ 13 ♗e3 (13 ♗e2?? ♗xc3+ 14 ♕xc3 ♖xe2+) 13...♕a5 and now:

d21) After 14 ♗e2!? b5! 15 0-0, the commonly cited line, Kapengut's 15...c4, meeting 16 ♕c2 with 16...b4 intending ...♗f5, has the huge hole 16 ♗xc4! bxc4 17 ♕b7, which is even worse than line 'd1'. So Black should play 15...b4! 16 ♘d1 ♘f4 17 ♗xf4 (17 ♗c4 ♗a4) 17...♖xe2 18 ♖e1 (18 ♕c4 ♕b5! is unclear) 18...♖xe1+ 19 ♘xe1 ♗a4 20 ♕c4 ♘d7 with ideas such as ...♗b5 and ...♖e8, achieving equality.

d22) Although 14 ♘d2 f5 looks active for Black, one wonders about 15 g4!? f4 16 ♘c4. This may cast 11...♘h5 into doubt.

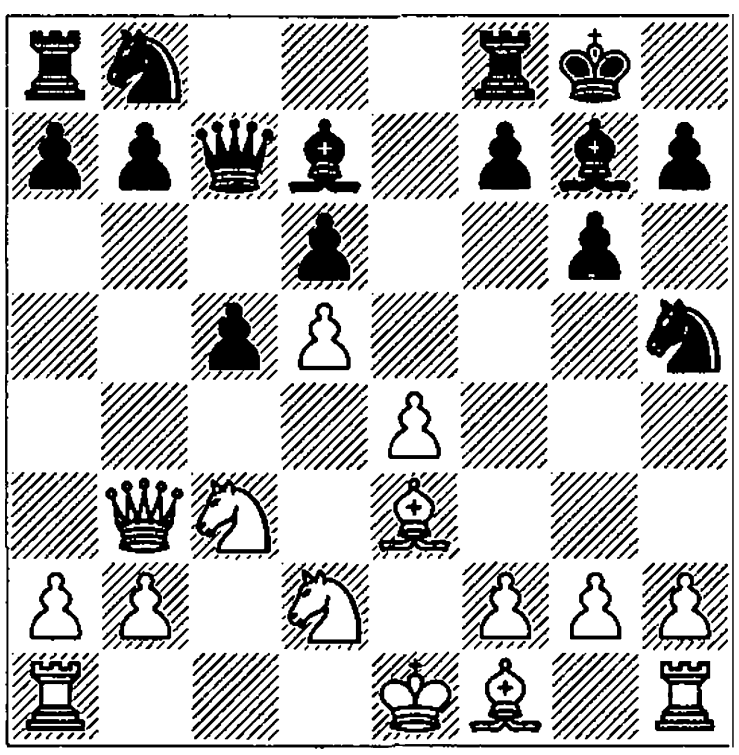
d3) 11...dxe5 (I like this best) 12 ♗xe5 ♖e8 (12...♕b6 is also fine, in view of 13 ♕xb6 axb6 14 ♗c4 ♗g4! or 13 ♗c4 ♕xb3 14 axb3 {14 ♗xb3 ♗g4 =} 14...♗g4 15 0-0 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘bd7 17 ♗d6 ♖fc8 with equality, Gahwens-Kaspret, Cologne 1980) 13 0-0-0 ♕b6 (or 13...♕c8 – Kapengut) 14 ♕xb6 axb6 15 ♔b1, and now 15...♗f5+ is equal. A more double-edged try would be 15...♗g4 16 ♗g3 ♘bd7; for example, 17 ♗d3 ♘h5 18 ♘b5 ♘xg3 19 hxg3 ♘e5, which is unclear.

11...♘h5

Kapengut (in *NIC Yearbook 18*) gives 11...♖e8 as playable. However, in his main line, I don't like 12 ♗e2 ♘a6 13 0-0 ♖ac8 14 ♖fe1 c4!? 15 ♘xc4 ♘c5 16 ♕a3 ♗f8 17 ♕xa7, when White is just better.

12 ♗e3 *(D)*

B



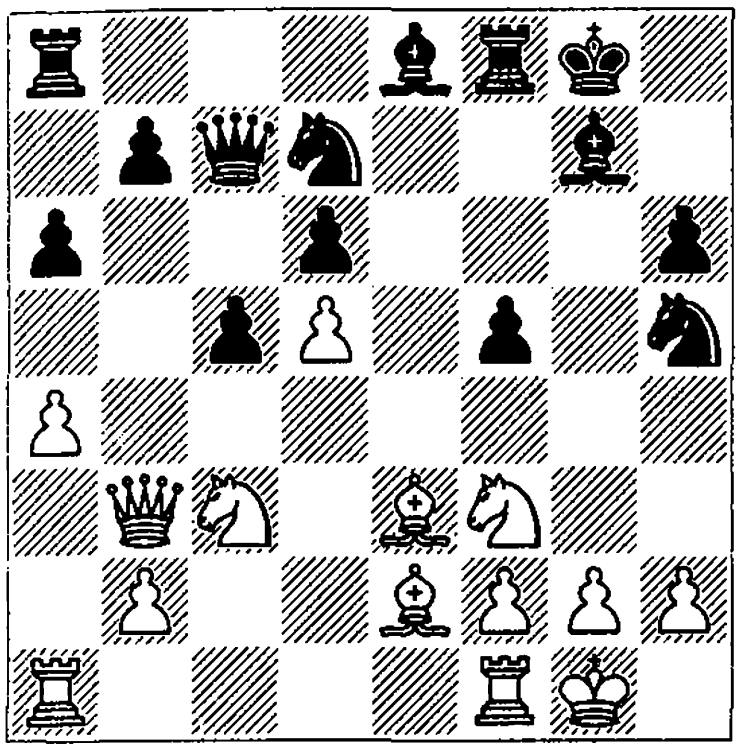
12...♘a6

I am recommending this move, which is barely known and not even considered by Psakhis, Schneider or some other sources. On an elementary level, it develops a piece, connects rooks, and creates no weakness. In addition, Black now has ways of improving his position, such as ...♖ab8 and ...b5, ...f5, or even ...♗d4!?.

a) Note that playing 12...♗d4? immediately fails, but not to the book suggestion 13 ♘b5'!' ♗xb5 14 ♗xb5, when in my opinion Black has equal play with moves like 14...♘d7 (or 14...♗xe3!? 15 ♕xe3 f5 16 0-0 f4) 15 ♗xd4 cxd4 16 ♕a4 ♘c5 17 ♕xd4 ♕a5. Rather, 13 ♗xd4! cxd4 14 ♘e2 ♘a6 15 ♘xd4 is strong, when Black lacks compensation; e.g., 15...♕a5 (15...♘c5 16 ♕c3) 16 ♕xb7! ♘c5 17 b4, etc. But, significantly, one can see that the inclusion of ...♘a6 would change this assessment. Compare what follows.

b) The book alternative, which is supposed to be equal for Black, is the much-played and analysed 12...f5 13 exf5 gxf5, which is so established that I should provide some indication of my dissatisfaction: 14 ♗e2 ♗e8 (the advance 14...f4? has proven insufficient in both theory and practice after 15 ♗xc5!, when one try is 15...f3!? 16 ♗xf3 ♕xc5 17 ♘de4!) 15 ♘f3 (threatening ♘g5) 15...h6 (I have looked in detail at alternatives, but don't believe in them; for example, 15...f4 16 ♗d2 h6 17 0-0 ♘d7 18 ♖fe1 a6 19 a4 ♖b8 20 ♕d1! ♘df6 21 ♘h4 or here 21 ♕c2; also falling short is 15...♕e7 16 0-0 ♘d7 17 ♖fe1 f4 18 ♗d2 ♘e5 19

♕d1! ♕f7 20 ♘e4!) 16 0-0 a6 17 a4 ♘d7 *(D)*.

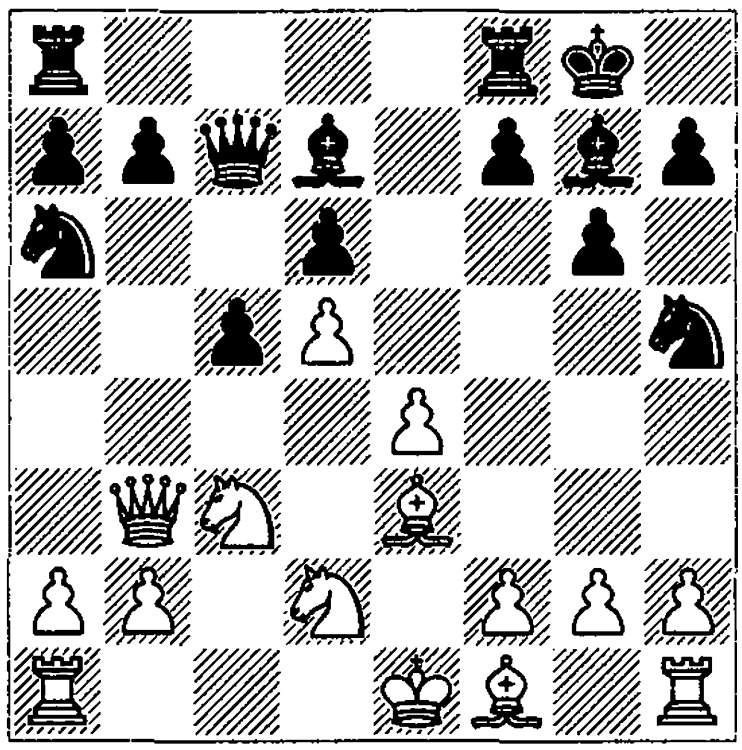


This is a key position which Kapengut gives as leading to a variety of 'unclear' assessments. However, I believe that Black's kingside weaknesses are very serious, and that a better assessment is probably '±'. This is important enough to take a brief look at:

b1) 18 ♖ae1 ♖b8 19 ♕d1 ♕d8, when it seems to me that just 20 ♗c1! is strong, protecting b2, so that ...b5 cannot be played. The weakness of f5, e6 and g6 will tell.

b2) Perhaps an even better idea is 18 ♖fe1 ♖b8 19 ♕d1 (that move again!) 19...♕d8 (19...♘hf6 20 ♕c2 ♘g4 21 ♗f4 ♘ge5 22 ♘h4!) 20 ♗c1! (Kapengut's 20 g3? b5! is unclear) 20...♕f6 21 a5 ♗f7 22 ♖a4 ♖be8 (22...♖fe8 23 ♖h4 b5 24 axb6 ♖xb6 is Kapengut's improvement, which he considers "unclear", but White is much better after 25 ♖a4! ♘b8 26 ♘d2) 23 ♖h4 (23 ♕b3 ±) 23...♖e7 24 g3 ♖fe8 25 ♗f1 ♖xe1 26 ♘xe1 ♕g6 27 ♗e2 ♘hf6 28 ♘g2 and White has control of the key squares, Wegner-A.Schneider, Hamburg 1987. This is a good illustration of Black's difficulties.

Thus I think 12...f5 is rather weak. In looking for a better method for Black, I discovered that the text-move, 12...♘a6 *(D)*, to which we now return, has hitherto unnoticed virtues.



13 ♗e2

This is the only move given by Kapengut. But there are some untried alternatives, including a very critical one:

a) 13 ♗xa6 is almost always harmless or bad in such positions, since it sacrifices light squares and the b-file: 13...bxa6 14 0-0 f5 15 exf5 ♖ab8 (15...♗xf5 =) 16 ♕a3 gxf5 17 ♘c4 ♗b5 (or 17...f4 18 ♗d2 f3) 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♘a5 b4 20 ♕a4 ♗xb2 and one likes Black.

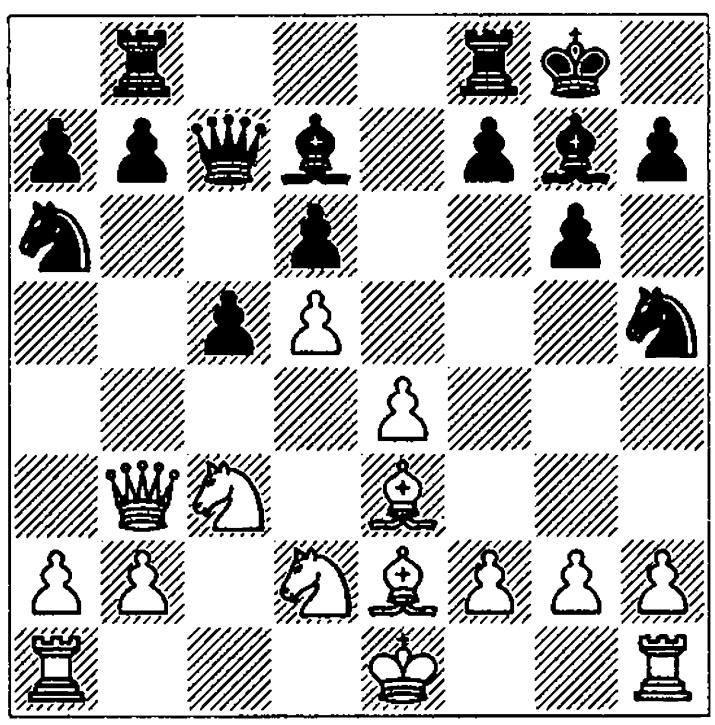
b) 13 f4?! exposes White down the e-file: 13...♖ae8 (13...♔h8 14 ♗e2 f5 is also OK) 14 ♗e2 ♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 (15 ♕xc3 f5) 15...♘f6! (15...♗f5 is just slightly better for Black) 16 ♗f3

(16 e5 dxe5 17 0-0 e4!) 16...♘xe4! 17 ♘xe4 f5 ∓.

c) 13 ♘c4 can hardly be more natural. I think that Black must respond aggressively by 13...♖fe8! 14 ♗e2 (14 f3 f5; 14 a4 can be answered by 14...♗xc3+!? or 14...♘b4 15 ♗e2 f5), and now 14...b5! is an attractive sacrifice: 15 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♕xb5 ♘b4 17 ♕a4! (17 ♘xd6? ♕xd6 18 ♗xc5 ♘c2+! 19 ♔d2 {19 ♔f1 ♕f4} 19...♕e5 −+; 17 0-0 ♖ab8 18 ♕a5 {18 ♕a4 ♖xe4} 18...♕xa5 19 ♘xa5 ♘f6 ∓) 17...♖xe4 18 a3 ♘xd5 19 ♗f3 ♘xe3! 20 ♗xe4 (20 fxe3 ♖ae8 and now 21 0-0-0 ♖4e6 22 ♖xd6 ♗xb2+! or 21 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 22 0-0-0 {22 ♖d1? ♕e7 ∓} 22...♗xb2+! with the point 23 ♔xb2 d5!) 20...♘xc4 21 ♗xa8 ♕e7+ 22 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 23 ♔g1 ♗xb2 24 ♕d1 (24 ♖d1? ♕e2) 24...♗xa1 25 ♕xd2 ♗d4 ∓. Wild stuff!

13...♖ab8 *(D)*

13...♗d4!? still seems wrong in view of 14 ♗xh5 ♗xe3 15 fxe3 gxh5 16 0-0 ±.



W

14 a4

The obvious alternative is 14 ♗xh5 gxh5, and now:

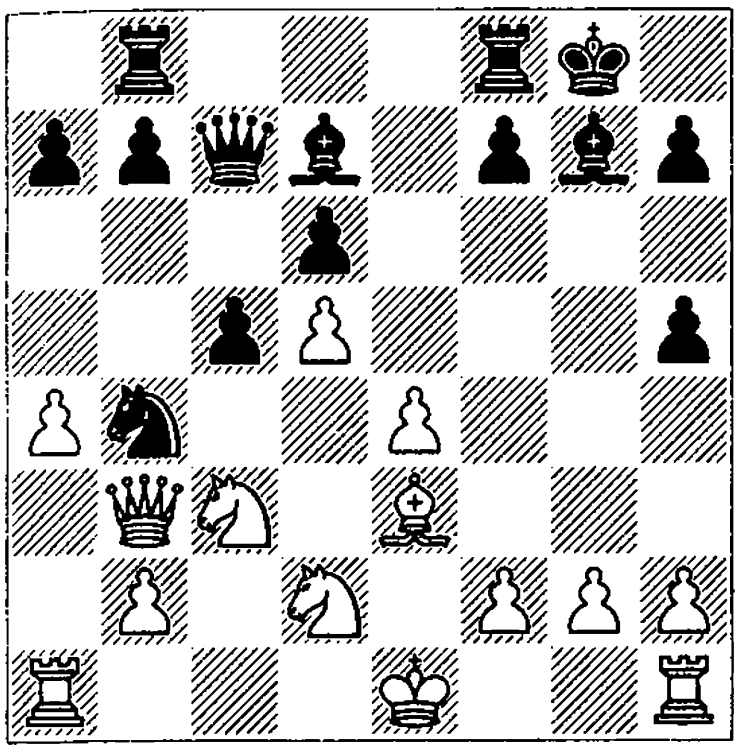
a) 15 ♕d1 f5 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♕xh5 ♘b4 with the apparently forced sequence 18 0-0 ♗d3 19 ♖fd1 ♗g6 20 ♕g5 ♖f5! (20...♘c2!? 21 ♖ac1 ♖f5 =) 21 ♕g3 ♗e5 22 ♕h3 (22 f4 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♘xd5) 22...♘c2 23 ♖ac1 ♘xe3 24 fxe3 ♖h5! 25 ♕e6+ ♔h8 ∓ with the point that 26 g3?? fails to 26...♗f5.

b) 15 ♘e2 f5 16 ♘f4 (16 ♗f4 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♖be8! gives Black an attack), and an ambitious try is 16...♕a5 (16...fxe4 17 ♘xh5 ♗f5! is unclear), hoping for 17 ♘xh5?! (17 a4 b5; 17 0-0 ♗b5!? 18 ♖fc1 ♕b4 19 ♘c4 ♗xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♕xb3 21 axb3 fxe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖f5!) 17...♗a4! 18 ♕a3 (18 ♕c4 ♗b5 19 ♕b3 ♘b4) 18...♘b4 19 0-0 ♘c2, when Black has the advantage: 20 ♕d3 (20 ♘c4? ♘xa3 21 ♘xa5 ♗xb2) 20...♘xa1 21 ♖xa1 (21 ♘xg7 ♗b5) 21...♗xb2 22 ♘c4 (22 ♖b1?! ♕c3! ∓) 22...♕c3 favours Black.

14...♘b4 15 ♗xh5

Logical. The other path is 15 ♘c4 ♘f6 (now that the knight is ensconced on b4, Black can regroup to prepare for moves like ...b5 and ...f5) 16 0-0 (16 ♗f4 ♘e8 17 0-0 ♔h8 and ...f5) 16...b6 17 ♖ac1 a6 18 ♗f4 ♘e8 19 ♖fe1 ♔h8 (19...b5!? 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘a3! ♕a5! 22 ♖a1 c4 23 ♕d1 ♕b6 is obscure) 20 ♗d2 f5 21 ♘e3 f4 22 ♘c2 (22 ♘f1 b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♘d1 ♘a6) 22...♘xc2 23 ♖xc2 ♖a8 =, with the idea that 24 ♕c4 is answered by 24...♘f6!. In these positions, ...♗e5 can often be a useful preparation for a kingside pawn advance.

15...gxh5 *(D)*



16 ♘b5

What else? 16 0-0 f5 17 f3 a6 is comfortable for Black; e.g., 18 a5 f4 19 ♗f2 ♘d3.

After the text-move (16 ♘b5), play might go 16...♗xb5 17 axb5 f5 with plenty of counterplay; for example, 18 f3! (18 exf5 ♖xf5 hits the d-pawn) 18...f4 (18...a6!?) 19 ♗f2 ♗xb2! 20 ♖xa7 ♖a8 21 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 22 0-0 ♕g7 =, since 23 ♘c4? ♗d4 is suddenly very bad for White.

The ♗f4 systems are not seen much these days, and yet one can see how difficult they are for both sides to play. Careful study of this chapter can teach one a lot about Benoni dynamism. After mastering the tactical and strategic concepts, it is probably worthwhile to go back and examine move-order issues. Finally, the reader may have noticed how much of this chapter is bare analysis, unsubstantiated by games. I strongly encourage readers to do independent work on the variations herein.

3 Systems with ♗g5

In this chapter, we look at an ambitious complex of systems for White involving the move ♗g5. White wants to force Black into a decision about the pin on his f6-knight, hoping that moves like ...h6 and ...g5 will prove weakening. By activating the queen's bishop, he also makes the move e3 attractive, since that would otherwise hem in the bishop. On the other hand, this strategy often costs White the bishop-pair by the sequence '1'...h6 '2' ♗h4 g5 '3' ♗g3 ♘h5. White is also more prone to allowing concessions on the queenside, in part because the dark squares on that wing are less well guarded.

These systems have long been out of fashion, and therefore quite a few of the examples will be from older games. Nevertheless, there are unexplored areas in any Benoni variation, and some new ideas are also needed to uphold older assessments. This slightly unsettled state of theory could be taken to indicate that some of the ♗g5 lines will eventually regain their popularity. In any case, the Benoni player would be well advised to know the ideas behind these variations and how to respond to them.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6

The material is divided into three major categories, according to how White proceeds. He can play: ♘f3 and ♗g5 without e4; or ♘f3 and ♗g5 with e4; or, finally, the combination of ♘f3, ♗g5, e4 and ♗e2 (irregular move-orders will be discussed as we go along).

Therefore:

A: 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗g5 44
B: 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 50
C: 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗g5 54

Needless to say, these systems can often transpose to one another. Line B contains a note on the move-order 7 ♗g5, which often comes to the thing after 7...♗g7 8 ♘f3, but can give rise to some independent possibilities.

A)

6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗g5

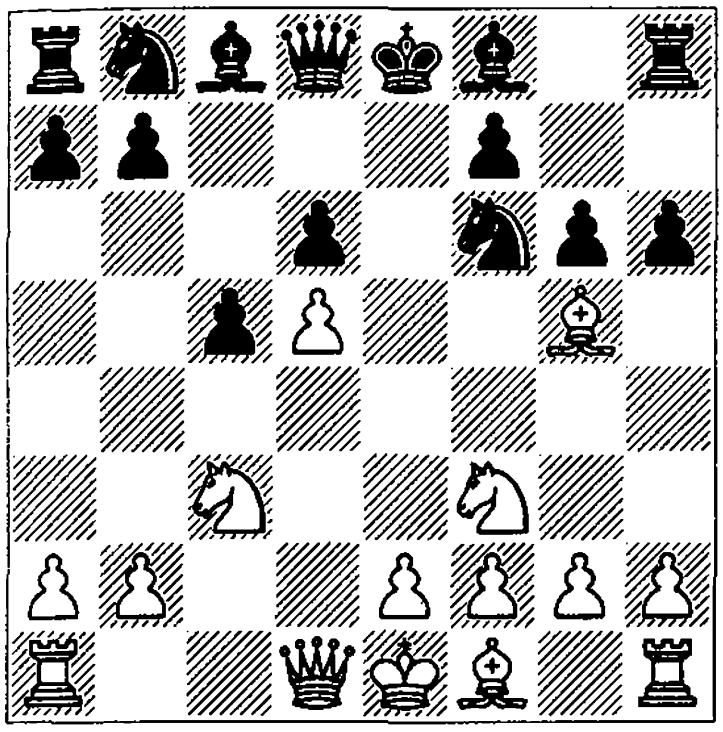
This is the most important move-order these days, as systems with e4 are out of favour. Still, Black has nothing to fear if he is prepared.

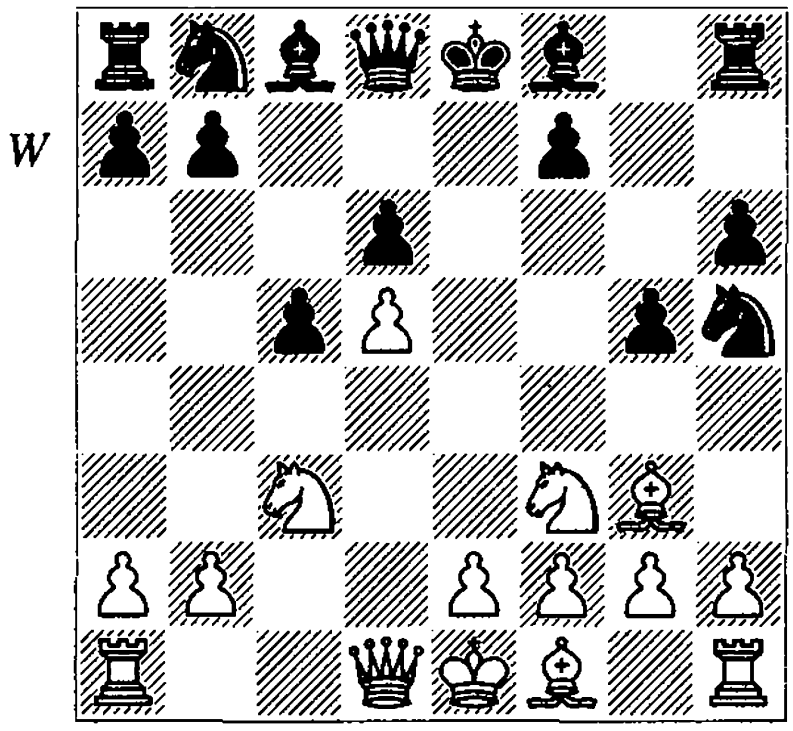
7...h6 *(D)*

A move designed to see where White's bishop is going.

8 ♗h4

The bishop maintains its pin, but cannot now retreat to defend White's queenside. 8 ♗f4 is a poor version of a ♗f4 system because the bishop can be





attacked immediately: 8...♘h5 (or perhaps 8...g5!? 9 ♗c1 {9 ♗g3 ♘h5} 9...♗g7 10 h4 g4 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 12 ♘c4 ♘b6 =) 9 ♗g3 (9 ♗e3!? ♗g7 10 ♕d2 ♘a6 11 g3 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♗g2 ♗b7!? 14 0-0 ♘f6 15 ♘e1 ♘g4 =) 9...♗g7 10 ♘d2 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♘d7 12 e3 0-0 = Filip-Rajković, Smederevska Palanka 1978.

Now there is another split:

A1: 8...g5 45
A2: 8...♗g7 49

A1)

8...g5

Our main system, which is direct and forcing.

9 ♗g3 ♘h5 *(D)*

10 e3

Or:

a) 10 ♕a4+ ♘d7!? (10...♕d7 11 ♘b5 ♔d8! gains the bishop-pair; e.g., 12 e3 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♗g7 14 ♖b1 ♘a6 15 ♗e2 ♘c7 = Jovanovich-Emma, Thea 1970, even though 12 e4 ♘xg3 13 fxg3! does give White dangerous chances down the f-file, Bjel-Sorosi, corr. 1978) 11 ♕e4+ (11 ♘b5 ♕b6) 11...♕e7 12 e3 (12 ♗xd6?! ♕xe4 13 ♘xe4 f5 14 ♗xf8 fxe4 15 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 16 ♘xg5 e3!, Shadursky-Suetin, Vladimir 1962) 12...♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♗g7 14 ♘d2 (14 ♕c2 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗b5+ ♔f8 =, intending ...a6 followed by ...b5, and answering 17 a4 with 17...♔g7) 14...♘e5 15 ♗b5+ ♔f8 16 ♘c4 ♖b8!? 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♗d3 f5 19 ♕a4 b5 20 ♕c2 (20 ♗xb5 a6) 20...f4! with an attack on both wings, Gil Gonzales-Dolmatov, Barcelona 1983.

b) 10 ♘d2 can be a challenging move in these lines. Here Black has the reply 10...♘d7! (anticipating ♘c4; 10...♗g7 transposes to Line A2) 11 ♘c4 ♘b6 12 e3 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 a6 (the immediate 13...♗g7 is also possible) 14 a4 ♗g7 15 ♕d2 ♘xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗d7 17 a5 ♕f6 (17...b5 18 axb6 ♕xb6 = Agdestein; the two bishops and b-file pressure compensate for Black's weaknesses) 18 ♖a3 0-0-0 19 ♖b3, Agdestein-Ljubojević, Wijk aan Zee 1988, and now Agdestein makes the very interesting suggestion 19...♔c7! with the idea ...♗c8, which absolutely

secures the king and prepares pawn-breaks such as ...h5-h4 or ..f5-f4.

10...♘xg3

This avoids 10...♗g7 11 ♗b5+, which has been played in a number of top-flight games over the years, and is generally acknowledged to be perfectly playable for Black (see *ECO*, for example). But if you prefer to allow 11 ♗b5+ (or transpose into this position by 8...♗g7 9 e3 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 11 ♗b5+), the main line goes 11...♔f8 12 ♗d3! ♘xg3 and then:

a) 13 fxg3!? ♕e7 14 0-0 ♘d7 15 ♗f5 ♘f6 16 ♘d2, and now the safe 16...a6 17 ♕f3 ♔g8 18 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♖f2 ♖e8 20 ♖af1 h5! = led to a draw in Yusupov-Gavrikov, USSR Ch (Frunze) 1981. Schneider suggests instead 16...♕xe3+'!' 17 ♔h1 ♗xf5 18 ♖xf5 ♕d3 "and White has no attack for the sacrificed pawn", which is an exaggeration in view of 19 ♖f3!; for example, 19...♕d4 20 ♕c2 ♘xd5?! 21 ♕f5 or 19...♕g6 20 ♕b3 b6 21 ♖af1.

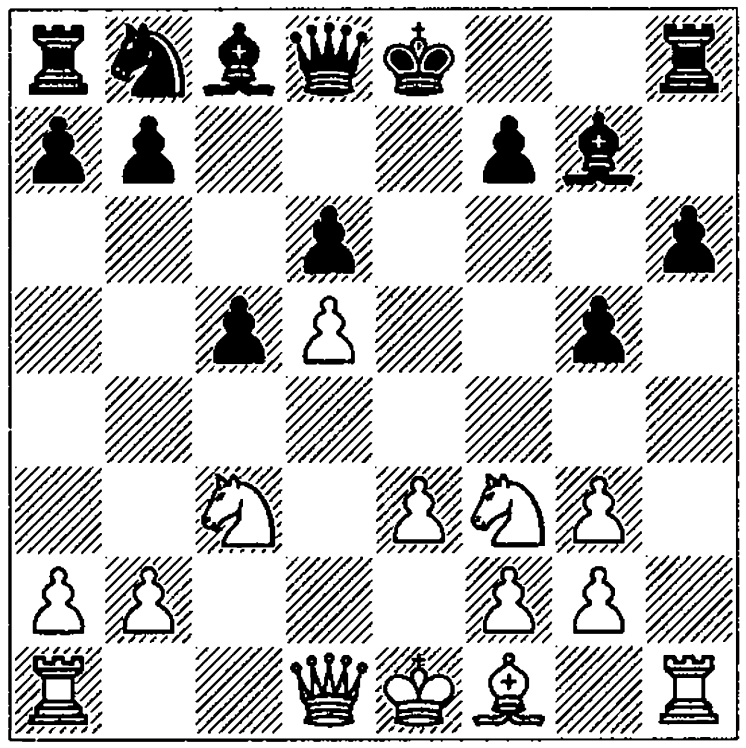
b) 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 ♕c2 ♕e7 15 ♗f5 (15 0-0?! h5 16 ♗f5 ♘e5 ∓ Dеže-Velimirović, Sombor 1972) and now 15...♘f6, 15...♘b6 and 15...♖b8 all give Black a satisfactory game.

11 hxg3 ♗g7 *(D)*

This position is characterized by the trade-off between Black's weaknesses on the kingside and his bishop-pair. Other factors include the bishop on g7, which is particularly impressive, and the potential insecurity of Black's king. Now White has two main moves:

A11: 12 ♘d2 46
A12: 12 ♗d3 47

W

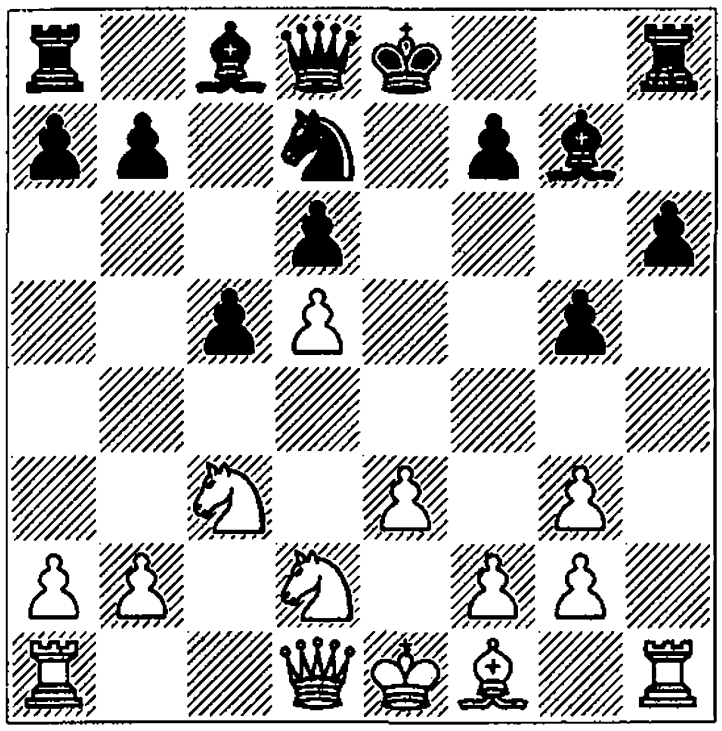


12 ♗b5+ is fairly pointless now; e.g., 12...♘d7 (12...♗d7 13 a4 ♗xb5 14 axb5 ♘d7 =; 12...♔f8!? Psakhis) 13 ♕c2 a6 14 ♗d3 b5 15 a4 c4!? 16 ♗f5 b4 17 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7! 18 ♘e4 ♕e7 19 ♕xc4 f5 20 ♘ed2 ♗xb2 21 ♖b1 ♗c3 ∓ 22 ♘d4? ♖c8 (22...♕e4!) 23 ♘c6 ♗xc6 24 dxc6 ♕e4 25 ♕xe4+ fxe4 26 ♔e2 d5 ∓ Plaskett-Ward, St Helier 1998.

A11)

12 ♘d2 ♘d7! *(D)*

This anticipates ♘c4. 12...0-0 would be Line A2, and 12...a6 13 a4 ♘d7 is similar to 12...♘d7; e.g., 14 ♘ce4 (14 ♗e2 ♘e5 15 ♘c4 ♘xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗d7 = Osmanagić-Portisch, Sarajevo 1962; 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗d3 ♗d7 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♕h5 ♗g7 = 19 g4!? ♕c8 20 ♗e2 f5! ∓ Stigar-Bjarnason, Hamar 1983) 14...♘f6 15 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16 ♘c4 0-0 17 ♖a2!? ♗f5 (17...♗d7 18 a5 ♖ac8 is unclear – Cebalo) 18 a5 ♖ae8 19 ♗e2 ♕e7 20 0-0 ♗d7 = intending ...f5 and perhaps ...♗b5 at some point, Agzamov-Cebalo, Vršac 1983.



13 ♕c2

Or:

a) 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 (13...♘b6) 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♕c2 a6 16 a4 ♗g7 17 ♗d3 ♕e7 with equality, Bagirov-Savon, Moscow tt 1973.

b) 13 ♗e2 ♕e7 14 g4 ♖b8 15 0-0 ♔f8 16 a4 ♘f6 is 'unclear' – *ECO*. Filip-E.Green, Nice OL 1974 continued 17 ♖e1 (17 ♘c4 h5 18 gxh5 g4 19 ♘b5!? ♖xh5!, hitting d5) 17...h5 18 gxh5 g4 19 g3 ♕e5 20 ♗f1 ♕xh5 21 ♗g2 and now Black could have tried 21...♘d7 22 ♘b5 (22 ♘c4 ♘e5 23 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 24 ♔f1 a6) 22...♘e5 23 ♘xd6 ♘d3 24 ♕c2 ♘xe1 25 ♖xe1 b6 with the advantage.

13...♘e5

Or 13...♕e7 14 a4 ♘e5 15 ♗b5+ ♔f8 16 a5 h5! 17 a6 h4 18 gxh4 gxh4 19 axb7 ♗xb7 20 ♖a4 ♗c8 21 ♗e2 ♖b8 22 ♔d1!? ♗f6 23 ♔c1 ?! ♖g8! 24 ♗f1 ♘g4 ∓ Karpov-Gavrikov, Mazatlan rpd 1988.

The text-move (13...♘e5) is Geller-Malaniuk, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983, which continued 14 ♗b5+ (14 ♗e2 = Geller) 14...♗d7 15 a4 0-0 ('=' *ECO*) 16 ♗e2 ♕e7 17 ♖a3 f5! with an equal position.

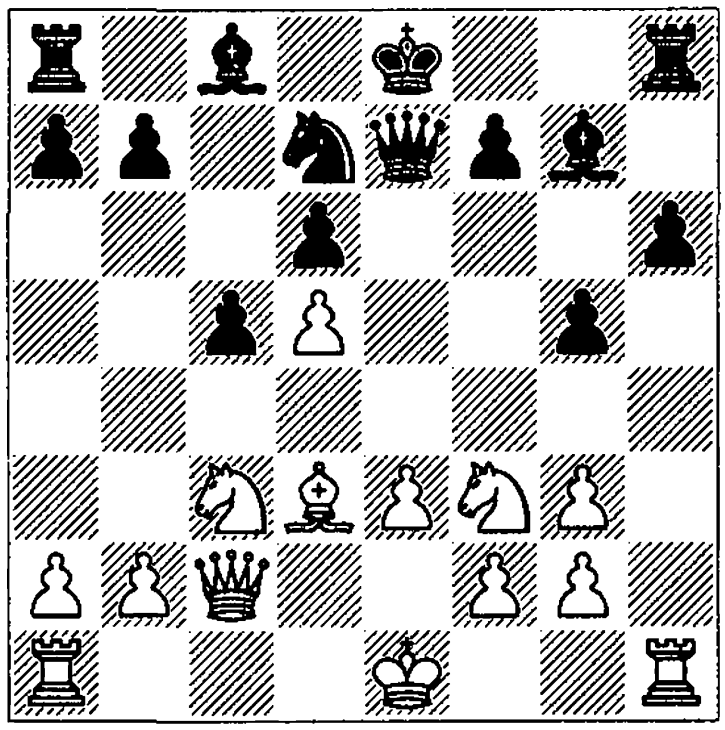
A12)

12 ♗d3

Probably the best move, concentrating on Black's weakened f5-square.

12...♘d7 13 ♕c2 ♕e7 *(D)*

13...a6 14 a4 ♖b8 is also played, but I prefer the text-move.



14 a4

Or:

a) 14 ♗f5!? 0-0 15 0-0 a6 16 a4 ♖b8 17 a5 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 ♖a4 ♘e5 20 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 ∓ Polaczek-de Firmian, Philadelphia 1989. The b-file is more important than f5.

b) 14 ♘d2 ♘e5 15 ♗f5 ♗xf5 16 ♕xf5 ♕d7 17 ♕xd7+ (17 ♘de4 ♔e7! ∓; after the exchange of queens, ...f5 will come with tempo) 17...♔xd7 18 ♔e2 f5 19 a4 ♖he8 = Vilela-Ye Jiangchuan, Lucerne OL 1982.

c) 14 0-0?! h5, when ...h4 at some point could prove very dangerous for White.

14...a6 15 ♗f5

White wants to exchange the bishop on c8 to secure the light squares, but this costs time. Alternatives:

a) 15 0-0 0-0 (after 15...h5'!' 16 ♗f5 g4, Boersma continues 17 ♘d2 h4, which looks good for Black, but 17 ♘h4! appears very strong) 16 ♖ab1 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 a5 ♖b8 = Hartston-Nunn, British Ch playoff (London) (3) 1981.

b) 15 ♘d2 ♘e5 16 ♗e4!? (16 ♗f5 c4!?) 16...♖b8 (16...0-0 =, intending ...f5) 17 a5 ♗d7 18 0-0 h5! 19 f3! h4 (19...b5 20 axb6 ♖xb6 ∓) 20 g4 h3?! 21 g3 is unclear, Chetverik-Widera, Fridek Mistek 1995.

c) 15 a5 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♘a4 and now *ECO* gives 17...♖b8 =. Black could also continue 17...♗d7 18 ♖b1 ♗xa4! 19 ♕xa4+ ♔e7 =.

15...♘e5

Black clarifies the situation immediately. He reasons that f5 can be contested, and that his pawn-structure will limit the mobility of White's knights. This solution seems preferable to 15...b6!? 16 ♘d2 ♖b8 (*ECO*), but 15...♘f6 16 a5 0-0 17 ♘d2 ♗d7 18 0-0 ♗b5, as in Groszpeter-Bilek, Hungary 1983, indicates another possible direction of play.

16 a5

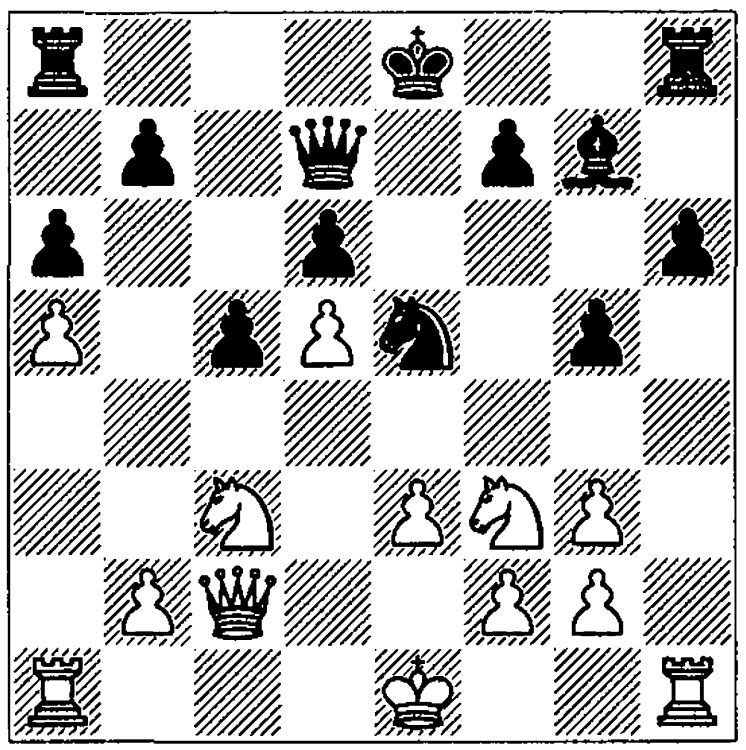
This is considered the most dangerous move. 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♕f5 ♕d7 (or 17...♖b8) 18 ♕xd7+ ♘xd7 (18...♔xd7 =) 19 ♘d2 c4! 20 ♔e2 f5 21 a5 ♗xc3! 22 bxc3 ♘f6 ∓ Yuferov-Kindermann, Naleczow 1984.

16...♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♕d7

17...♘d7 may also equalize: 18 ♘d2 (18 ♖a4!? ♕f6!? with the idea that 19 ♘e4 is met by 19...♕xb2! 20 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 21 ♘xf7 ♗c3+ 22 ♔d1 ♕b3+ 23 ♕c2 ♕xd5+ with an unclear position) was played in Groszpeter-Kindermann, Budapest 1985. Then 18...♖b8 19 ♘c4 0-0 20 ♘a4 ♖fe8, given as '±', should be OK for Black, since ...♘e5 follows.

18 ♕c2 *(D)*

B



Equal, according to *ECO*.

18...0-0-0

This is not the only move. For example, Black could try 18...♖c8 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘a4 ♖c7 21 e4 c4 22 ♖a3 ♗d4!? (22...♕b5!? 23 ♘c3 ♕d7! = with the point 24 ♖a4 ♖c5) 23 0-0 ♕b5 24 ♘c3 ♕c5! 25 ♕a4+ ♔d8, when he has ideas like ...♖e8 or ...♖f8 and ...f5.

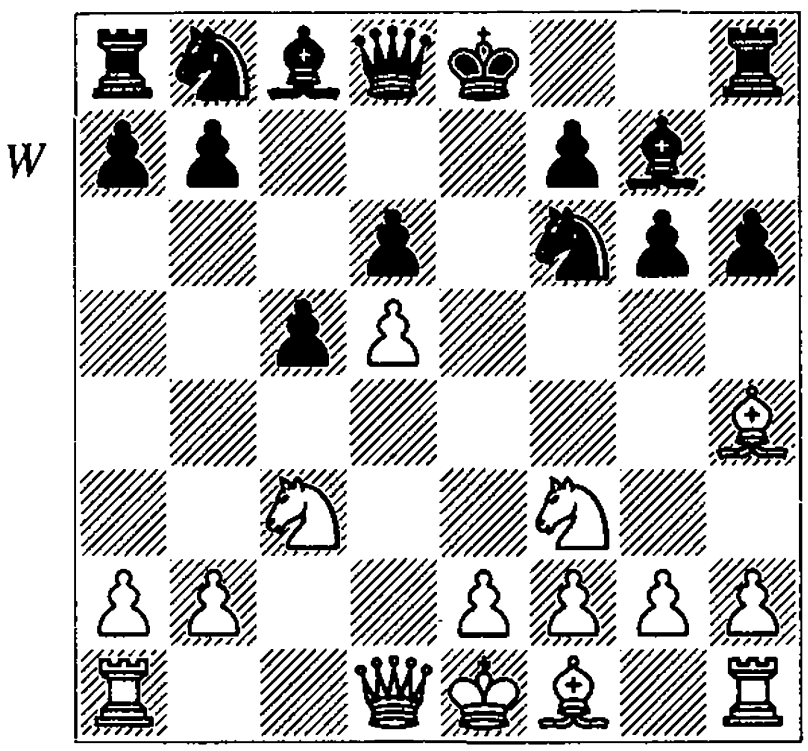
After the text-move (18...0-0-0), Tukmakov-Agzamov, Erevan 1982 continued 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘a4 ♔b8 21 ♘b6, and now Black could have tried 21...♕b5! 22 ♘c4 (22 ♖a2 f5! 23 ♘c4 {23 ♕a4? ♗c3+!} 23...h5 ∓, in view of 24 ♘xe5? dxe5 25 ♕xf5?? ♕b4+) 22...♕b4+ (or 22...f5 =) 23

♔d1 f5 24 ♖c1 ♗g7 with no problems.

Playing to ensure the exchange of White's bishop by ...h6, ...g5 and ...♘h5 is Black's surest route to equality. Neither 12 ♘d2 nor 12 ♗d3 achieves any advantage in this line, and Black can always keep the game double-edged if he wants to.

A2)

8...♗g7 *(D)*



I will cover this move in addition to 8...g5, into which it sometimes transposes, both in order to give the reader a good alternative and because so many important games have been played with it. As my presentation is not exhaustive, the reader may wish to consult other Benoni sources to investigate irregular moves and other details.

9 e3

9 ♘d2 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 and now:

a) 11 e3 transposes to Line A1.

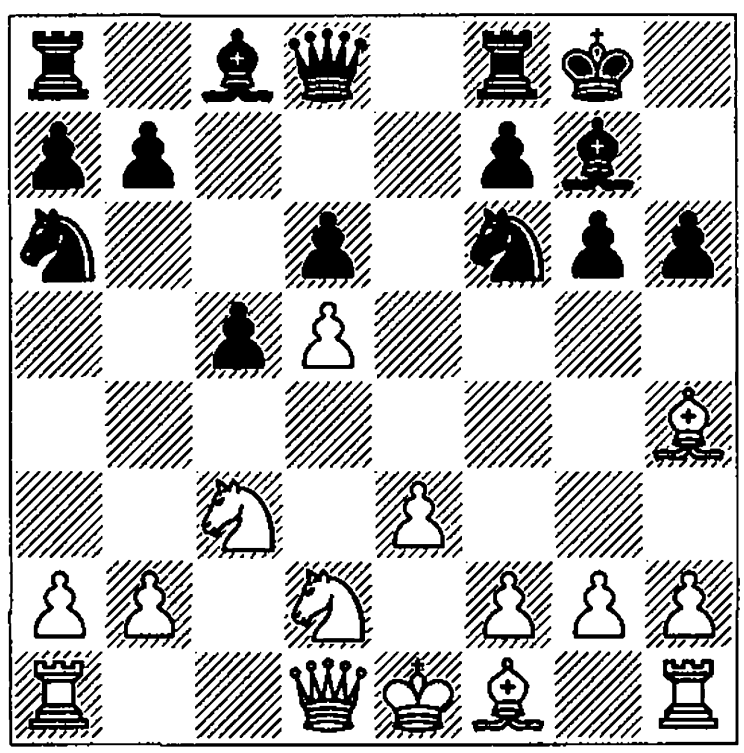
b) 11 ♕a4+ differs from 10 ♕a4+ in Line A1 (note 'a' to White's 10th move) since f8 is available. 11...♔f8 12 e3 and now 12...a6 13 ♕c2 b5 = Sale-Zelčić, Solin 1996, or 12...♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 ♕c2 ♘e5 = Uhlmann-Espig, Raach 1969.

c) 11 ♘c4 ♘xg3 12 hxg3 0-0 13 e3 ♕e7 14 ♕c2 (14 ♗e2 ♖d8 15 0-0 ♘d7 16 a4 ♘e5 = Botvinnik-Tal, Moscow Wch (2) 1960; 14 ♗d3 is well answered by 14...♘a6!, continuing to monitor f5, because 15 ♘b5!? ♗d7! 16 ♘cxd6 c4! leaves White's knights stranded, and intends 17 ♗b1 f5! or 17 ♗xc4? ♗xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♕b4+) 14...f5 15 ♗e2 ♗d7 16 a4 ♘a6 17 0-0 ♘b4 18 ♕d2 ½-½ Smejkal-Ftačnik, Prague 1989. I'd slightly prefer Black because of his two bishops.

9...0-0

Now 9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 transposes to the note to Black's 10th move in Line A1. That is quite playable, but I want to give the reader a safer alternative.

10 ♘d2 ♘a6!? *(D)*



In response to White's rather slow set-up (e3 and ♘d2), Black aims for

...♘c7 and ...b5. This is a slightly unusual but respectable strategy.

11 ♗c4

White has a number of reasonable alternatives, probably of equivalent value to the text-move:

a) 11 ♗d3 ♘c7! (threatening ...g5 and ...♘cxd5; I think this is better than the speculative 11...♘b4!? 12 ♗c4 a6 13 a3 g5 14 ♗g3 b5, O.Foisor-Suba, Romania 1983); e.g., 12 ♕b3 ♖b8 13 a4 (13 ♘de4 b5 14 0-0 ♗b7! =) 13...b6 14 0-0 a6!? (14...♗b7) 15 ♘c4 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘a5 ♗d7 =.

b) 11 ♘c4 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♗e2 ♗a6 14 0-0 ♕d7! (coordinating Black's pieces more efficiently than 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 h3! ♕d7, Ehlvest-Bellon, Logroño 1991) 15 h3 ♖ae8 16 ♗g3 ♗xc4 17 ♗xc4 ♘e4 = Law-Nunn, London 1977.

c) 11 ♗e2 ♘c7 12 0-0 b5!? 13 ♘xb5 (13 ♗xb5 ♖b8 14 ♗d3!? ♖xb2 15 ♘c4 ♖b8 16 ♕c2 ♗a6!? 17 ♖abl ♖b4 with a type of dynamic equality; both sides have many options, of course) 13...♘xb5 14 ♗xb5 ♖b8 15 ♕e2 g5 16 ♗g3 ♘xd5 = Bannik-Suetin, Sochi 1978. This game deserves further investigation, because the same position could be reached in variations with ♗d3 and ♗c4 as well. See note 'a' to Black's 12th move.

11...♘c7 12 0-0

12 a4 ♖b8 13 0-0 seems well met by 13...b6, since White's slow development gives Black time to play for ...a6, and he can also play ...♗a6 in some cases; e.g., 14 e4 (14 h3 a6 15 ♕e2 ♖e8 with the ideas ...♗b7 and ...♕d7) 14...a6 15 ♕f3?! b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♗d3? g5 18 ♗g3 ♗g4 19 ♕e3 ♖e8.

12...♖e8!?

The alternatives are interesting:

a) 12...b5!? 13 ♘xb5 ♘xb5 14 ♗xb5 transposes to note 'c' to White's 11th move.

b) 12...a6 13 a4 ♖b8 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 compares well for Black with the main line.

13 a4 ♗d7!?

Not bad, although again, 13...♖b8 14 ♕e2 b6! is logical, since the c8-bishop supports ...a6, can pressure the centre by ...♗b7, and may even have occasion to exchange a knight on c4 after ...♗a6. The main thing wrong with White's position is that it's hard to improve upon.

The text-move (13...♗d7) is Stempin-Stoica, Polanica Zdroj 1983, which continued 14 ♕e2 ♖b8 15 ♖fc1!? a6 16 a5 b5 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 ♖a2 ♕b8 19 b3 ♕b7?! (19...♘b5! = is preferable) 20 e4 ♘b5 21 ♘a4 ♘d4 22 ♕d3 ♗xa4! 23 ♖xa4 ♘b5, which is almost equal, although Black is somewhat tied down.

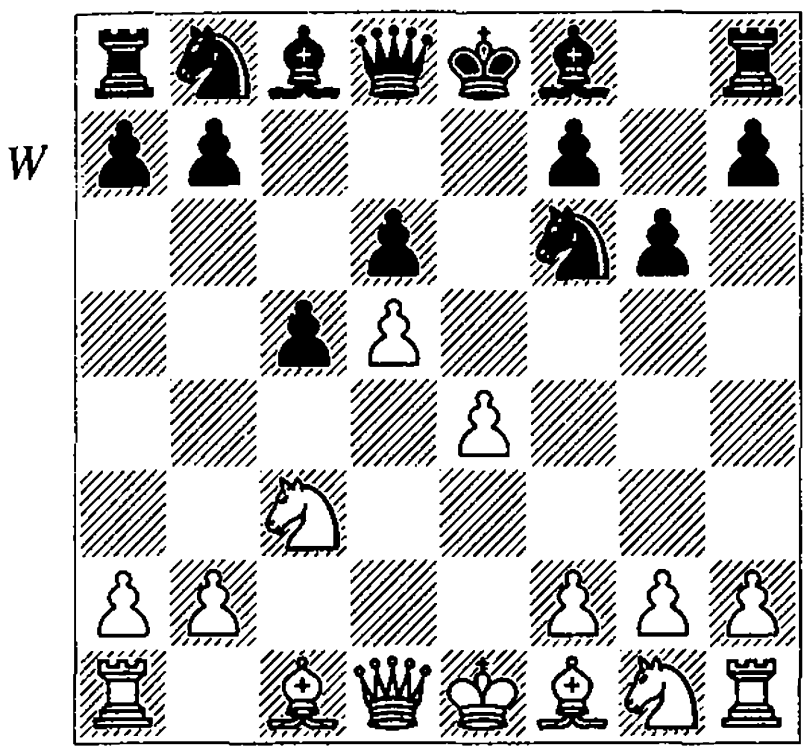
If one is going to play 8...♗g7 instead of 8...g5, then the plan of ...♘a6-c7 is an unpretentious way to achieve equality.

B)

6 e4 g6 *(D)*

7 ♘f3

7 ♗g5 first is an interesting idea. This move-order is neglected by every leading source (except for a footnote in *ECO*), since it tends to transpose if play continues 7...♗g7 8 ♘f3 or 7...h6



8 ♗h4 ♗g7 9 ♘f3. But White can attempt to play independently by, for example, ♗d3 and/or ♕d2:

a) 7...h6 8 ♗h4 ♗g7 is maybe the less demanding option; e.g., 9 ♕a4+!? (9 ♗d3 0-0 10 ♘ge2 ♖e8 11 0-0 a6 12 a4 ♘bd7 13 ♖b1!? ♘e5 14 ♗c2 ♗d7 = Nardin-Savoia, Nova Gorica 1999; compare lines below) 9...♗d7 10 ♕b3 ♕c7 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 ♘ge2 g5 (12...a6 13 a4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♘h5, Uhlmann-Tringov, Varna OL 1962, has been given as equal, but 15 ♗xd6! is too strong) 13 ♗g3 ♘h5 =, in view of 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♕xb7 ♕b6 16 ♕xa8 ♘a6.

b) After 7...♗g7, White has a number of independent options:

b1) 8 ♗d3 a6 (8...0-0 9 ♕d2 a6 10 a4 ♖e8 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 f4? h6 13 ♗h4, Nikolaou-Petraki, Poros 1998, 13...♘xe4!) 9 a4 (9 ♘ge2!? b5 10 0-0 h6 11 ♗h4 0-0 =) 9...h6 10 ♗h4 0-0 = intending ...♘bd7-e5, and in some cases, ...g5 with ...♘h5.

b2) 8 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 (or 8...♗d7) 9 f4 is very ambitious before White has developed: 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 h6 11 ♗h4 ♕a5!? 12 0-0, Celiz-Caramia, Acasusso 1994, and the most direct course is now 12...♘xe4! 13 ♘xe4 ♕xb5; e.g., 14 ♘xd6 ♕xb2 15 ♖b1 ♕xa2 16 ♗e7 ♘f6 17 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 18 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♖xb7 ♕a6 20 ♖b1 ♖d8.

b3) 8 ♗e2 h6 9 ♗h4 (9 ♗e3 a6 {or 9...0-0 followed by ...♖e8 and ...♘a6} 10 a4 0-0 11 ♕d2 ♖e8 12 f3 h5 =; e.g., 13 ♗g5 ♕a5 or 13 ♗d1?! ♘bd7 14 ♘ge2 ♘e5 ∓ – see *ECO*) 9...0-0 and now 10 ♕d2 ♕e7 is equal, while 10 ♘f3 transposes to Line C.

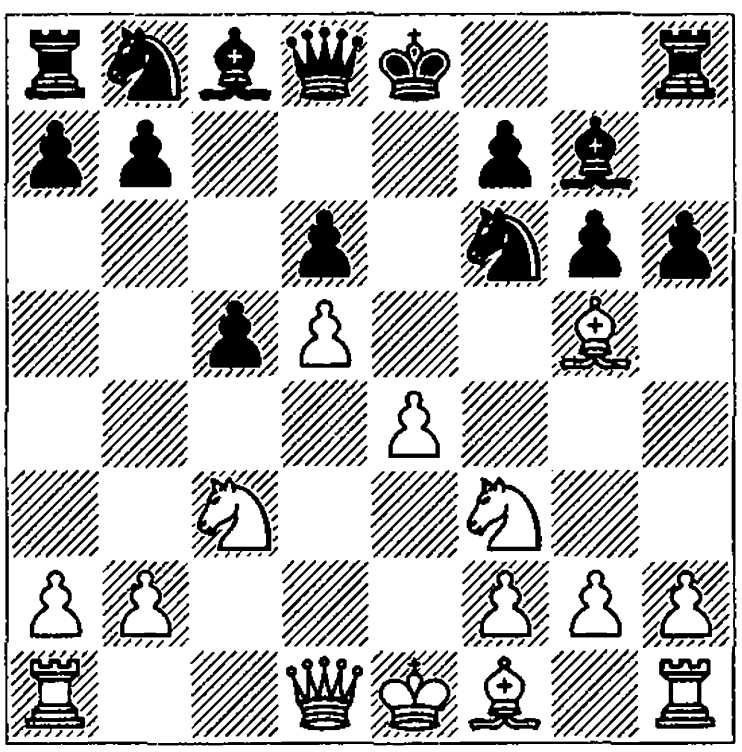
b4) 8 ♕d2 0-0 9 ♗e2 (9 ♗h6 ♖e8 10 ♗xg7 ♘xe4!) 9...a6 10 a4 ♕a5 intending ...b5 and moves like ...♕b4 and ...♖e8.

b5) 8 f4 ♕b6!? 9 ♕c2 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♖e8 11 ♘d2 a6 (11...♘xe4! 12 ♘cxe4 f5 looks quite strong) 12 ♗d3 ♘g4 13 ♘c4 ♕c7 14 a4 (14 h3 ♘f6) 14...♗d4! = Goczo-Istrati, Kiskunhalas jr tt 1995 (a game between two 12-year-old girls!).

7...♗g7 8 ♗g5

Most of the theory cited here is older, but it is still essential that Black know what he's doing.

8...h6 *(D)*



9 ♗h4

9 ♗f4 is tricky. 9...0-0 (9...g5 10 ♗b5+! ♔f8 11 ♗e3 ± Uhlmann-Golz, Zinnowitz 1967) 10 ♘d2 (a sort of Knight's Tour; 10 ♗e2 a6 11 a4 ♗g4 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 ♘c4 ♘b6 16 0-0 ♘xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♕h4! was equal in Tararykov-Sergienko, Voronezh 1998) 10...b6!? (better is 10...♕e7! 11 ♗e2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 a6 13 a4 ♖b8; e.g., 14 ♘c4 ♘e8 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♘xb6) 11 ♗e2 ♗a6 12 0-0 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 a6 14 a4 ♘h5 15 ♗e3 ♘d7 16 ♔h1 ♘e5!? 17 g4! (17 f4 ♕h4! 18 ♗f2 ♕xf4 19 ♗xc5 ♕h4! 20 ♗f2 ♕d8 =) 17...♘f6 18 h3 g5 19 f4 gxf4 20 ♗xf4 ♘fd7 21 ♘f3 and with the prospect of an eventual g5, White's chances seem preferable, Kljako-Jurković, Zagreb 1998.

9...a6

9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 11 ♗b5+ ♔f8 12 e5! is a famous attacking line, which, even if defensible, causes too much trouble for Black.

10 ♘d2

Or:

a) 10 a4 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 and now:

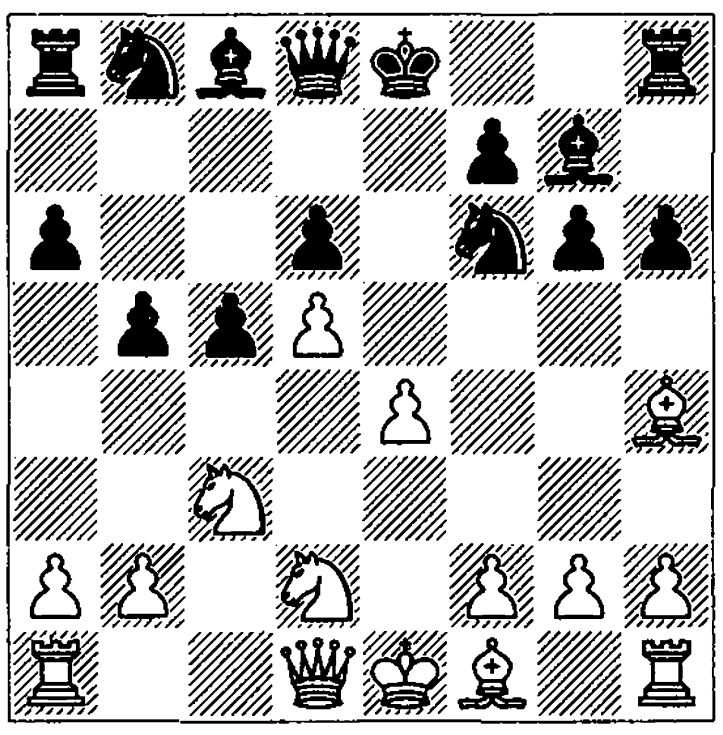
a1) 12 ♗e2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♕c2 ♖b8 is very comfortable for Black, F.Martinez-de Firmian, Las Vegas 1993. See also Line C, where similar positions arise without ...a6 and a4.

a2) 12 ♘d2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 (15 ♘e3 g4! 16 ♗e2 ♕g5 ∓ *ECO*) 15...♗xe5 with equality – *ECO*.

b) 10 ♗e2 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 12 0-0 (12 a4 is line 'a1') 12...b5 13 ♕c2 ♘xg3 14 fxg3 ♘d7 with two bishops and no problems, Radzikowska-Moiseev, Katowice 1991. White should only recapture with fxg3 when he gains a concrete attack thereby.

10...b5 *(D)*

An interesting transposition arises after 10...0-0 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 ♗e2 (12 ♘c4 ♕e7!? 13 ♗d3 ♘e5) 12...♕e7 13 0-0, which reaches a known variation from the Classical Main Line. Play can continue 13...g5!? 14 ♗g3 ♘e5 15 ♕c2!? ♘e8 16 f4!? ♘g6! 17 fxg5 hxg5 18 ♖ae1 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♔g7, which is unclear according to *ECO*. But White may have better, and giving up f5 so early is not to my taste.



W

11 ♕c2

White's two alternatives are important, involved, and very instructive:

a) 11 a4 is often played: 11...b4 12 ♘cb1 0-0 (or 12...g5 13 ♗g3 ♕e7 =, an interesting game going 14 f3 ♘h5 15 ♘c4 ♘xg3 16 hxg3 ♘d7 17 ♘bd2 ♗e5 18 g4! ♗g3+ 19 ♔e2 with obscure prospects, Bertok-Matulović, Ljubljana 1960; then 19...♗f4 20 a5 ♖a7 is one idea, intending ...♘e5 and

...♗d7-b5; Black's alternative move 12...♕e7 has also done well) 13 ♗d3 (13 ♗e2 ♖e8 14 f3 g5 15 ♗f2 ♘h5 16 ♘c4 a5 17 0-0 ♘f4 ∓ Lambert-Nunn, London 1977) 13...♖e8 14 0-0 ♘bd7 (14...♕c7 is also effective; then the move in *ECO*, 15 ♖e1, is well met by 15...♘g4! 16 ♘c4 ♘e5) 15 ♖e1 (15 f4 ♕c7 16 ♕f3, Sorin-Ginzburg, Buenos Aires 1994, might be met by 16...♘xd5 17 exd5 ♗xb2 18 ♖a2 ♖e3! 19 ♕xe3 ♗d4 20 ♕xd4 cxd4; although White has plenty of material, his weak d-pawn and Black's queenside advantages result in a dynamic equality) 15...♘e5 16 ♗f1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♖a7! 18 ♖a2 ♖ae7 19 b3, Alburt-Tukmakov, Ashkhabad 1978, and now the simple 19...♘g6! 20 f3 ♘h5 21 ♗f2 ♘hf4 gives Black at least equality, with ideas like ...♘e5 and a well-timed ...f5 in the offing. The reader will notice this ...♖a7-e7 manoeuvre throughout the book.

b) 11 ♗e2 ♘bd7 (11...0-0 12 0-0 ♘bd7 transposes to line 'b2') and now:

b1) 12 ♕c2 c4 (or 12...♖b8, to answer 13 a4 with 13...c4 – Nunn) 13 a4!? ♖b8 14 axb5 axb5 15 b4!? cxb3 16 ♕xb3 0-0 17 0-0 ♘c5 18 ♕b4? ♘xd5! 19 ♗xd8 ♘xb4 20 ♗c7 ♖b7 21 ♗xd6 ♗xc3 22 ♗xc5 ♖d8 ∓ Zsu.Polgar-Suba, Dortmund 1985.

b2) 12 0-0 0-0 13 a4 (13 ♕c2 c4 14 f4 ♖e8 15 ♖ae1 ♘c5 16 ♔h1 ♗d7 = Sigurjonsson-Y.Grünfeld, Lone Pine 1979) 13...b4 14 ♘cb1 ♖e8 15 f4!? ♕c7 16 ♗f3 c4! (a bold counterattack) 17 e5 c3 18 bxc3 (18 exf6 c2 19 ♕c1 ♘xf6 20 ♘b3 cxb1♕ 21 ♖xb1 ♕xc1 22 ♖bxc1 ♗d7 ∓) 18...bxc3 19 ♕c1!? ♘xd5! 20 ♗xd5 ♕c5+ 21 ♔h1 ♕xd5 22 ♘xc3 ♕e6 ∓ A.Mikhalevski-Psakhis, Israeli Ch (Jerusalem) 1996.

11...0-0

The normal move, but not necessarily the easiest one:

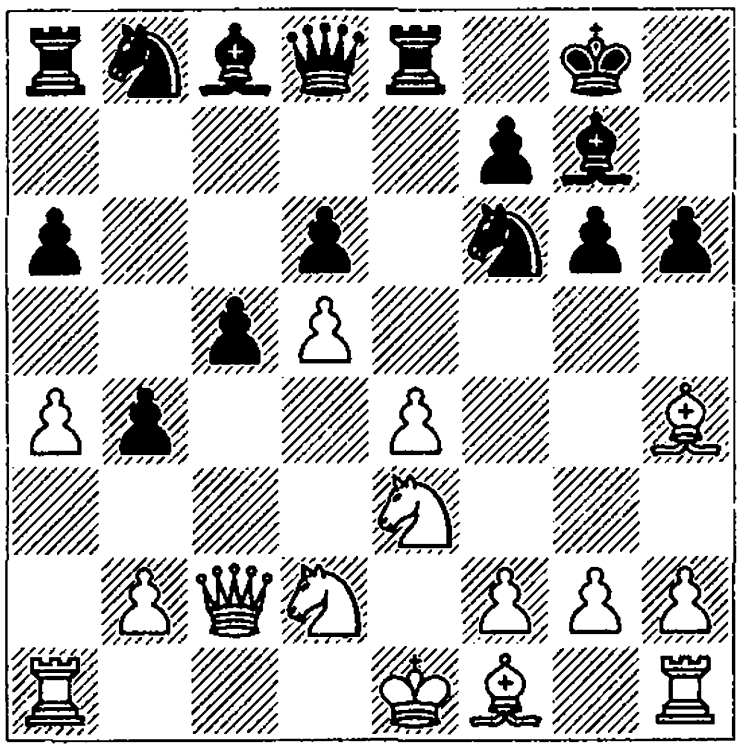
a) 11...g5 12 ♗g3 ♘h5 13 a4 b4 14 ♘d1 ♘xg3 15 hxg3 ♘d7 16 ♘e3 ♘e5 with no special problems (17 f4 ♘g6!), Golz-Soos, Polanica Zdroj 1968.

b) 11...♘bd7 12 a4 b4 13 ♘d1 0-0 14 ♗e2 (this position can also arise via 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗g5, i.e. Line C) 14...♖e8 15 ♘e3 b3! 16 ♕b1 ♖b8 17 a5! (17 0-0 ♖b4; 17 ♘ec4 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 =) 17...♖b4! 18 ♘ec4 ♘e5 19 ♘b6 g5 20 ♗g3 ♘xe4! 21 ♘xe4 ♗f5 22 f3 ♘xf3+! 23 gxf3, Calderin-Gi.Hernandez, Merida Torre mem 1997. Now Black should probably settle for 23...♗xe4 24 fxe4 ♖bxe4 25 0-0 ♖xe2 26 ♕f5! ♖8e7 with a small advantage.

12 a4 b4 13 ♘d1 ♖e8 14 ♘e3 *(D)*

14 ♗e2 is another position that can arise from Line C (7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗g5). Then among other moves (such as 14...♘bd7, which transposes to note 'b' to Black's 11th move), a fun line is 14...♖a7!?, with the usual idea of ...♖ae7, but also preparing to meet 15 ♘e3 with 15...b3! 16 ♕xb3 (16 ♕b1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♖ae7 18 f3 ♘h5 19 ♗f2 f5! =) 16...♖b7 17 ♕c2 g5 18 ♗g3 ♘xe4! 19 ♘xe4 ♖xb2 20 ♕d3 ♖xe4! 21 ♕xe4 ♗c3+ 22 ♔f1 ♖b4 23 ♘c4 ♗xa1 24 ♗d3 f5 25 ♕e1 ♗f6, when Black has a clear advantage, S.Mohr-Perenyi, Budapest 1988.

B



14...b3!?

This is a typical diversionary manoeuvre. 14...♘bd7 seems safer; e.g., 15 ♗d3 (15 ♗e2 b3) 15...♘e5!? (or 15...♕c7!? 16 0-0 ♘e5 17 ♘ec4 ± Chen De-Wang Zili, Chinese Ch 1987) 16 ♗e2 ♖b8!? = with the idea ...b3; e.g., 17 0-0 (17 b3 g5 18 ♗g3 ♘g6 19 0-0 ♘f4 =) 17...b3 18 ♘xb3 g5 19 ♗g3 ♘xe4.

15 ♕d3

15 ♕b1 g5 (perhaps 15...♘bd7!? 16 ♗c4 {16 f3 ♖b8!?} 16...♕a5 17 f3 ♖b8 18 ♖a3 ♘e5! 19 ♖xb3 ♗d7 could be tried, with pressure) 16 ♗g3 ♘h5 17 ♗d3 (Suba gives 17 ♗c4 ♘f4 18 0-0 ♕f6, although White may well have an edge) 17...♘f4 18 0-0 ♘d7!? 19 ♘f5 ♘e5 20 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♗c4 ♕a5!? and from here Spiridonov-Suba, Bajmok 1980 was eventually drawn, but this whole game is hard to trust.

15...♘bd7 16 f3

16 ♖a3 is answered by 16...♖b8 17 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 18 ♕xb3 g5.

16...♖b8 17 ♘ec4 ♘b6

½-½ F.Portisch-D.Cramling, Reggio Emilia 1979. I think that this is indeed about equal, since White again has trouble rounding up the b-pawn without tactical repercussions; for example:

a) 18 ♕xb3 ♕c7 19 ♘xb6 (19 ♘e3 ♗d7! 20 ♕c2 ♘bxd5!) 19...♖xb6 20 ♕a2 ♘xe4! 21 fxe4 ♖xb2 and ...♕a5.

b) 18 ♖a3 ♘xc4 19 ♘xc4 ♖b4! 20 a5 (20 ♗g3 ♘h5; 20 ♗e2 a5 21 0-0 ♗a6 22 ♖c1 ♕d7 =) 20...♗f5! 21 ♗e2 (21 g4 ♗xe4! 22 fxe4 g5) 21...g5 22 exf5 (22 ♗g3 ♘xe4) 22...gxh4 with a nice attack in view of 23 0-0 ♘xd5!.

The ...b3 idea is an essential Benoni resource, although in this particular case White's option of 15 ♕b1 worries me (at least in theory). For those who want something else, Black's 11th-move options are sound alternatives, and 14...♘bd7 can also be investigated.

C)

6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗g5

This is the old main line. It is in good theoretical shape from Black's point of view, but unfortunately a lot of analysis is required to prove that.

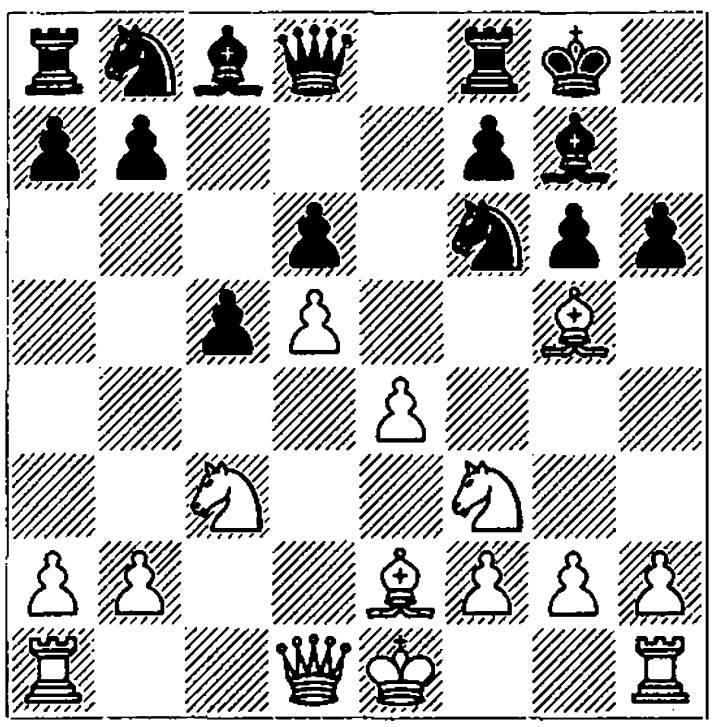
9...h6 *(D)*

10 ♗h4

Or:

a) 10 ♗f4 has been played fairly often, but as opposed to the last section, ...b5 ideas tend to be good, because ♗xb5 will occur at the loss of a tempo. This yields many options for Black containing instructive Benoni themes:

a1) 10...a6 11 a4 ♗g4 transposes to a type of Modern/Classical Main Line – see Chapter 9.



a2) 10...g5 11 ♗e3 b5! (11...♘g4 12 ♗d2 f5=) 12 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 14 ♕d2 ♕xb5 15 ♘xd6 ♕a6! (15...♕xb2) and again I like Black's compensation, with the possible continuation 16 ♗xc5 ♘d7 17 ♗a3 ♘e5 18 ♖d1 ♘xf3+ 19 gxf3 ♖d8 20 h4 ♖xd6 21 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 22 hxg5 ♗a6, which is at least equal.

a3) A restrained approach for Black is 10...♘a6 11 ♘d2 ♘c7 12 ♘c4 ♘fe8 13 a4 ♖b8 14 0-0 b6 15 ♘b5 ♘xb5! 16 axb5 ♖b7 = Barus-Khousseinov, Kuala Lumpur 1993.

a4) 10...b5 11 ♗xb5 (11 ♗xd6 = was given by Tal; then 11...♕xd6 12 e5 ♕b6 13 exf6 ♗xf6 is rather promising for Black, according to Schneider's analysis; 11 ♘d2 a6 12 0-0 ♖e8 = Gligorić-Malich, Munich OL 1958) 11...♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ leads to equality:

a41) 13 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕xb5 15 ♗xh6 ♖e8+ 16 ♗e3 ♗a6 17 ♕d2 ♘d7 =.

a42) 13 ♘fd2 ♕xb5 14 ♘xd6 ♕xb2 15 ♖c1 ♗a6!? = (or 15...♘d7 =) 16 ♕c2 ♕f6 =.

a43) 13 ♕d2 ♕xb5 14 ♘xd6 ♕a6! 15 ♖c1 g5 16 ♗g3 ♘d7 =; e.g., 17 h4 (17 ♕e2 ♕a5+) 17...g4 18 ♘h2 ♘e5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘c4 ♗d4! intending ...♖e8+.

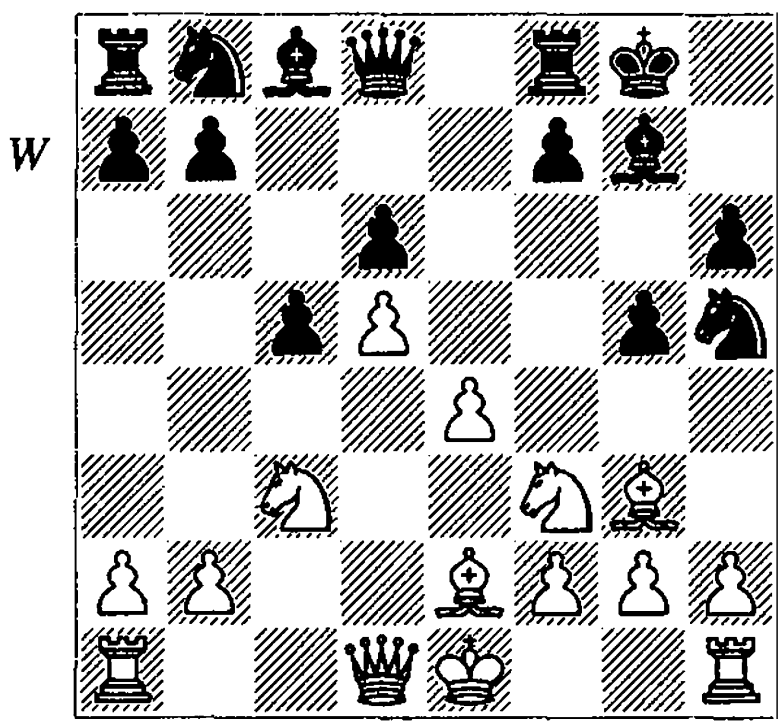
b) 10 ♗e3 could have the same answer: 10...b5! 11 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 13 ♕d2 (13 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕xb5 15 ♕b3 ♗a6! Psakhis) 13...♕xb5 14 ♘xd6 ♕xb2 15 ♖c1 is given as unclear in *ECO*. There might follow something like 15...♕xd2+ 16 ♘xd2 ♗a6 17 ♖xc5 (17 ♗xc5 ♘d7) 17...f5! 18 ♘2c4 ♖d8 19 ♖c7 ♗f8! 20 ♘f7 ♖d7 21 ♖xd7 ♘xd7, with at least equality.

10...g5

10...a6 11 ♘d2 b5 12 0-0 ♘bd7 transposes to note 'b2' to White's 11th move in Line B.

11 ♗g3 ♘h5 *(D)*

11...b5 is also played and considered equal or unclear; see *ECO*, for example.



12 ♘d2

This move is more pointed than 12 0-0 and now:

a) 12...♘xg3 13 hxg3 f5 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♘d2 ♘d7 is equal:

a1) 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♗d3 ♕f6 19 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 20 ♕d2, Pfleger-Hindle, Hastings 1964/5, and now Black can keep a clear edge by 20...♖ae8 21 ♖ae1 a6 22 a4 ♗d4.

a2) A recent example proceeded 16 ♗g4 ♗g6! 17 ♗e6+ ♔h8 18 ♘de4 ♘f6 19 ♕e2 b5!? (or 19...♘xe4! 20 ♘xe4 ♗d4 ∓) 20 ♘d2 a6 and the two bishops and queenside majority give Black the advantage, Hartung Nielsen-H.Olsen, Herlev 1997.

b) 12...f5 is similar, with a unique situation arising after 13 ♘d2 ♘xg3 14 fxg3!? ♕e7 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♗g4!? ♗xg4 17 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8! 18 ♕xg4 ♘d7 19 ♖f1+ ♔g8 ∓ 20 ♕e6+ ♕xe6 21 dxe6 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♘f8 24 ♖e1 ♖e8 ∓ Aaron-Robatsch, Varna OL 1962.

12...♘xg3 13 hxg3 f5

This active solution depends upon the strength of the two bishops and the f-file to offset the light-square weaknesses created. I think that this is an exciting way of proceeding.

The main line in most sources, and the choice of most players, is 13...♘d7 (13...a6 14 a4 ♘d7 is also played), which probably suffices for equality, but requires a more delicate hand with the move-order. One opinion of mine that the reader may find useful if he wishes to investigate the 13...♘d7 line, is that after 14 ♘c4 ♕e7 15 ♕c2 (the main line), I seriously doubt that the accepted move 15...♘f6 completely equalizes, and recommend instead 15...♘e5 16 ♘e3 ♗d7!? 17 a4, which is supposed to favour White, but here I think that 17...♖fb8!? should be considered: 18 f4 (18 a5 b5 19 axb6 axb6 20 0-0 ♘g6 =; 18 ♗b5 ♗c8; 18 ♘b5 a6 19 ♘c7 ♖a7 ∓) 18...♘g6, which ultimately should be equal.

14 exf5

Otherwise:

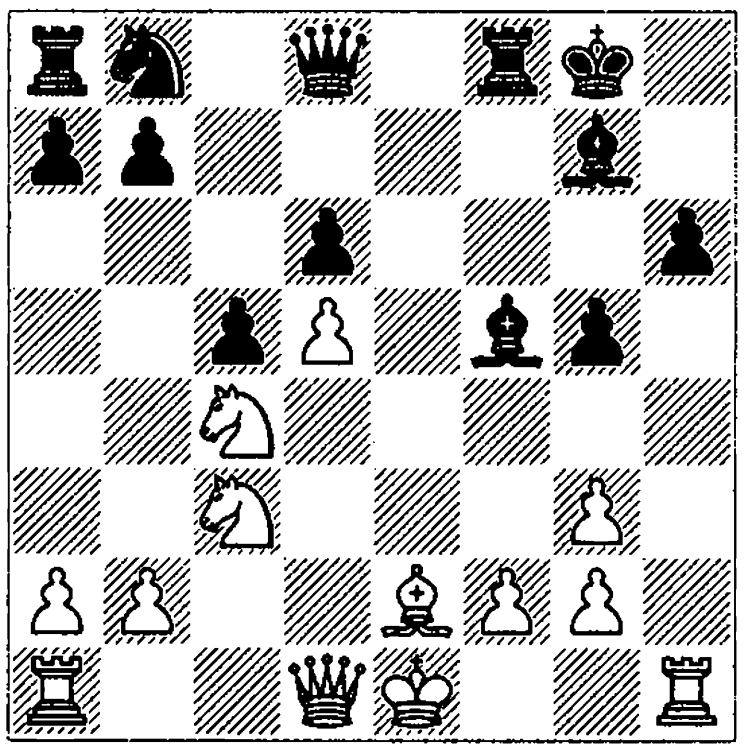
a) White should avoid 14 0-0?! fxe4 (14...f4!? 15 gxf4 ♖xf4 =) 15 ♘dxe4 ♗f5 16 ♗g4!? ♗g6! 17 ♗e6+ ♔h8 ∓ intending ...♗d4 and/or ...♘a6-c7.

b) Black can answer 14 ♘c4 with 14...♕e7 or 14...♘a6 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 0-0 ♕f6! – Psakhis.

14...♗xf5 15 ♘c4 *(D)*

The most ambitious try. 15 ♗g4?! makes no sense in view of 15...♕e7+ 16 ♔f1 ♕d7 ∓, and after 15 0-0 ♘d7 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 White should prefer 17 ♘e3 ♗g6 =, rather than 17 ♘xe5?! ♗xe5 18 ♗d3 ♕f6 ∓ Pfleger-Hindle, Hastings 1964/5.

B



15...♕e7

Especially if you're uncomfortable with ♘b5 ideas, 15...a6 ('!' Schneider) is an important alternative:

a) After 16 a4 ♕e7 there are two continuations, one resembling the main line and the other (line 'a2') taking a unique course:

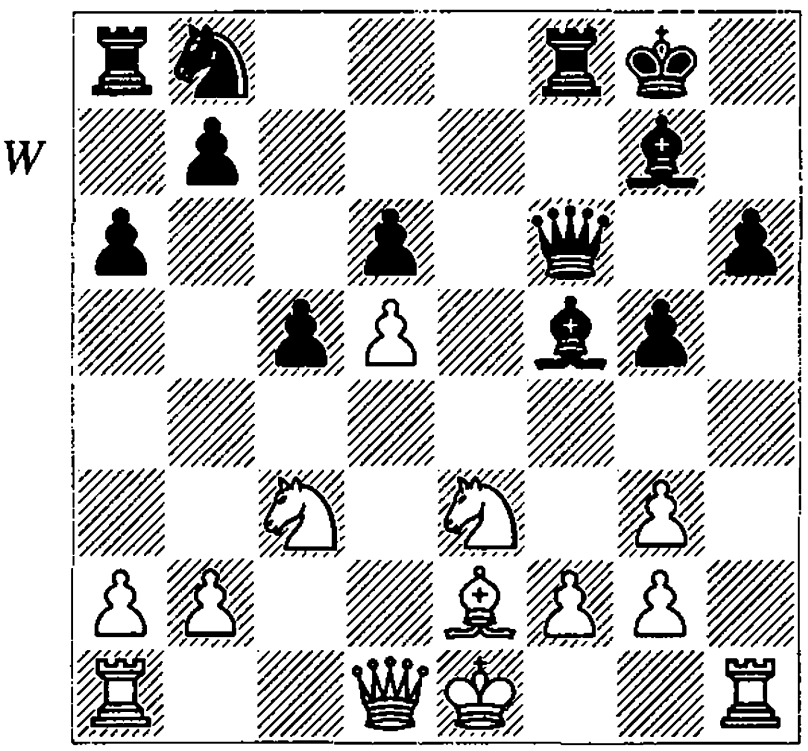
a1) 17 ♘e3 ♘d7 18 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 19 0-0 ♘e5 (19...♗d4!? 20 ♗g4) 20 ♗g4 ♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 '=' Wade; this is too modest an assessment, as 21...♖af8! 22 ♖ae1 ♕f7 is extremely strong; e.g., 23 f3 ♗d4+ 24 ♔h1 h5 25 ♕e4 ♗e5, etc.

a2) 17 ♘b6 ♖a7 18 0-0 (...♘d7 follows in any case) 18...♘d7 19 ♘xd7 (19 a5 ♘xb6 20 axb6 ♖aa8 21 ♗g4 ♗d4!) 19...♕xd7 20 a5 ♖aa8 21 ♘a4?! (probably not best, but ...♗d4 followed by doubling on the f-file was a serious problem) 21...♖ae8 22 ♘b6 ♕c7 23 ♘c4? (23 ♕d2 ♗d4 24 ♗h5 ∓) 23...♗d4 24 ♗d3 ♗xd3 25 ♕xd3 ♖f6 26 ♘e3 ♕h7! ∓ Bilek-L.Evans, Amsterdam 1964.

This interpolation of 15...a6 16 a4 is potentially a significant improvement for Black. White has to look for a more forcing idea, namely, the immediate...

b) 16 ♘e3. This move is surprisingly unmentioned. Black has a variety of moves that are hard to assess, especially when opposite-coloured bishops arise. Here is a small subset of possible continuations. 16...♕f6 *(D)* (16...♘d7 17 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 18 ♕c2!? ♖e5 19 0-0-0 b5!?) with these possibilities:

b1) 17 ♗g4 ♗h7! 18 ♗e6+ ♔h8 19 ♘g4 ♕g6 20 ♕e2 (20 a4 ♘c6!; 20 0-0 b5 21 ♖e1 ♖a7) 20...♘c6! 21 dxc6 ♖ae8 22 cxb7 ♖xe6 23 ♘e3 ♕f7! and the bishops will be very strong.



b2) 17 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 18 0-0 ♗d4 (or 18...b5 19 ♗g4 ♕g6 20 ♗e6+ ♔h8 {intending ...♖a7 and ...♘e5} 21 f4!? b4 22 f5 ♕f6 with good play) 19 ♗g4 ♕e5 and now:

b21) 20 ♕d2 b5 21 ♖ae1 ♕g7 22 ♖e6 ♘d7 23 ♖xd6 ♘e5 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 with interesting play in view of ...♘c4 or ...c4 with ...♗c5 and/or ...♘d3. Against the logical 25 ♕c2!?, Black has 25...♖a7!?, when 26 ♗f5? fails to 26...♖af7 27 g4 ♘xg4!. 26 ♘e4 is better, when 26...♗xb2!, while messy, seems to be at least equal for Black; e.g., 27 ♘xc5 ♗a3!? or 27 ♕xc5 ♘c4.

b22) 20 ♗e6+ ♔h8 21 ♕d2 b5 22 ♖ae1 ♕g7 23 ♖e2 ♘d7 24 ♘e4 ♕e7 = intending ...♘e5, when the power of the d4-bishop matches that on e6.

16 ♘e3

16 0-0 prepares ♗g4 and gives up pretensions down the h-file: 16...♘d7 (16...♘a6 17 ♗g4 ♘c7 might be a safe alternative) 17 ♘b5!? (one of those cases I referred to in the previous note; the 'normal' move is 17 ♗g4 ♗xg4 18 ♕xg4 and instead of Wade's 18...♘e5 '=', when the reply 19 ♖ae1 ! is unclear,

18...♖ae8! ∓ keeps ideas like ...a6 and ...♗d4 alive) 17...♗e4! (a *Fritz 6* discovery) 18 ♗g4 (18 f3? a6 19 ♘bxd6 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♗xd5 ∓; 18 ♘bxd6 ♗xb2 19 ♘xb2 ♕xd6 ∓; 18 ♘cxd6 ♗xb2 19 ♘xe4 ♗xa1 20 ♕c2! ♗d4!?, and White has some compensation, but at the very least, Black can give back the exchange; e.g., 21 ♘c7 ♘f6!? 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 23 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 =) 18...♘e5 19 ♗e6+ ♔h8 20 ♘bxd6 ♘xc4 21 ♘xc4 b5 22 ♕e1! (*Fritz* again; 22 ♖e1 ♗h7 23 ♘e5 ♖xf2! 24 ♔xf2 ♗xe5 25 ♕h5 ♗d4+ is difficult for White, as {perhaps?!} is 22 ♘d2 ♗d3 23 ♖e1 ♗xb2!? 24 ♗f5 ♕xe1+ 25 ♕xe1 ♖xf5) 22...bxc4 23 ♕xe4 ♗xb2 24 ♖ab1 ♗d4 =.

Complications like these motivate the 15...a6 suggestion above.

16...♘d7 17 g4?!

Ultimately more of a liability than a benefit. Alternatives:

a) 17 ♗d3?! ♗d4! (17...♗xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘e5 is also satisfactory, in view of 19 ♕c2? ♘g4! 20 0-0 ♖xf2! −+ or 19 ♕e2 c4 20 0-0 ♖ac8) 18 ♗xf5 (18 g4 ♗xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♘e5 20 ♕e2 ♖xf2!) 18...♖xf5 19 ♕e2 (19 ♕h5 ♖f6 ∓; 19 ♕d3 ♖af8 20 ♘d1? ♘e5 with a winning game for Black) 19...♖e8 20 ♘cd1 (20 g4 ♖e5 21 ♘cd1 ♘f6! 22 ♖xh6 ♘xd5 −+) 20...♕f8! 21 0-0 ♖fe5 ∓.

b) 17 ♘xf5! ♖xf5 18 0-0 ♘e5 = Wade. Play might continue 19 ♕d2 ♖af8 20 ♖ae1 ♕d8 =, when White mustn't overextend by 21 f4? due to 21...gxf4 22 gxf4 ♕h4! with an attack and a clear advantage.

17...♗g6 18 ♗d3 ♗xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♘e5 20 ♕e2 ♖f4!? 21 0-0-0 ♕f8

A clearer course is 21...♘xg4 22 ♘xg4 ♕xe2 23 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 24 ♘xe2 ♖f6 25 ♘g3 ♖e8 ∓.

22 f3 ♖e8 23 ♘e4 c4 24 ♔b1

Avoiding 24 ♘f5 ♘xg4! (24...♘d3+ 25 ♖xd3! is unclear) 25 ♘xg7 ♕xg7 ∓.

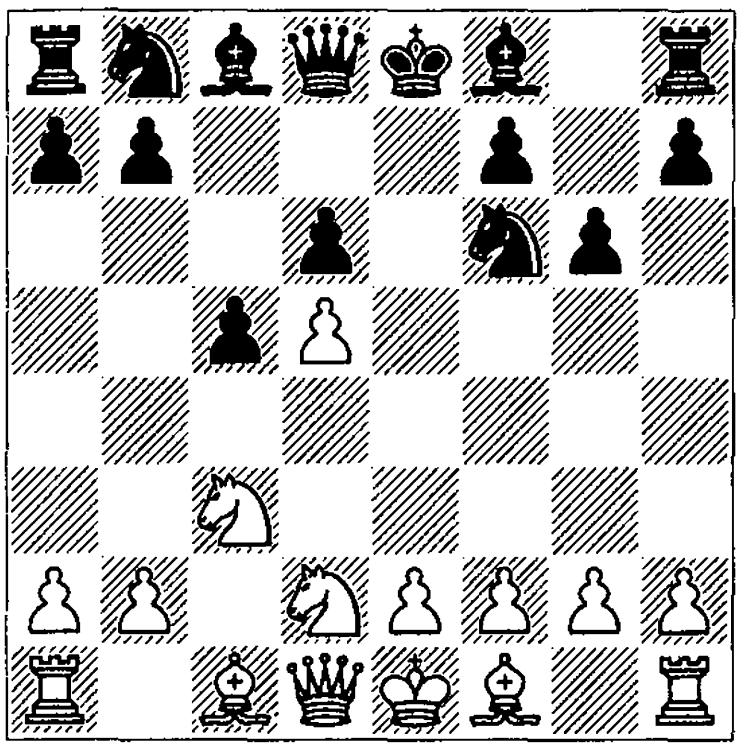
The text-move (24 ♔b1) is F.Portisch-Bilek, Zalaegerszeg 1969. Black has an obvious advantage. The game continued 24...c3?! (better is 24...♘d3! with the point 25 ♘xc4 ♘xb2! 26 ♘xb2 ♖exe4!) 25 bxc3 b5! 26 ♖he1 (26 ♖hf1 would prevent the following idea, but it's not necessary) 26...b4 27 c4? (27 cxb4! ♘xf3! 28 gxf3 ♖exe4 29 fxe4 ♕f6 30 ♖c1 ♖xe4! is unclear, but probably a perpetual after 31 ♖c8+ ♔h7 32 ♖c4) 27...♘xf3! 28 gxf3 ♖exe4 29 fxe4 ♕f6! (29...♖f2 30 ♘f5! ♖xe2 31 ♖xe2) 30 ♖d3? (but 30 ♕d2 ♖f2 31 ♕d4 ♕xd4 32 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 won't last long: 33 ♘f5 {33 ♘c2 ♗c3 and even ...a5-a4 and ...b3 is possible} 33...♗e5 34 ♖h1 ♖b2+ 35 ♔c1 ♖xa2 with ...b3 to come) 30...♖f2 31 ♕xf2 ♕a1+ 0-1. A fine game, and typical of the dynamism of this variation.

The systems of development with ♗g5 cannot be taken lightly. As always, Black must continue aggressively if he is to counteract White's attempt for a bind. Fortunately, the acquisition of the bishop-pair and the enhanced power of the g7-bishop (once his dark-square counterpart is gone) ensure Black lively and satisfactory play.

4 The Knight's Tour Variation

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 *(D)*

B



7 ♘d2 introduces the Knight's Tour Variation, so named in view of the early excursion of the f3-knight via d2 to c4. As discussed in Chapter 10, White can also use this move-order to get to the Classical Variation of the Benoni by 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 0-0. In the variation before us, White's basic idea is to exert direct influence on d6 by, for example, ♘c4, ♗f4, and sometimes ♘b5. As Black will soon commit his bishop to g7, the d6-pawn can be somewhat difficult to defend.

In 1985, I wrote a repertoire book that in part advocated the use of 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♗g5. Within a few years, Black had solved most of his problems in that line, and I was surprised to find that the theory of this variation has changed very little since. The Knight's Tour has become relatively rare at top level and Benoni sources tend to use the same older games to describe the theoretical terrain. Nevertheless, the traditional main lines are under-analysed for both sides, so there is room for creativity.

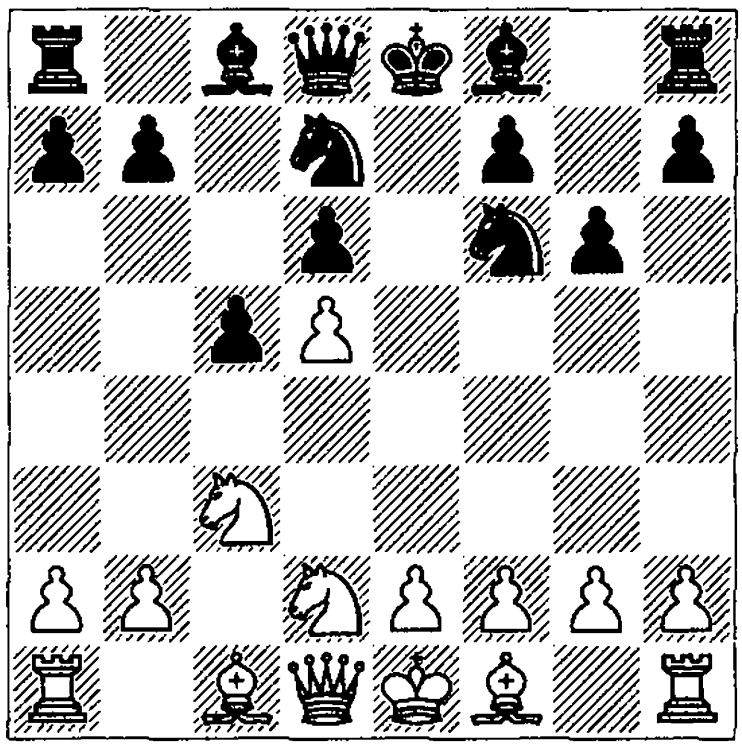
After 7 ♘d2, I will look at:

A: 7...♘bd7 59
B: 7...♗g7 64

A)

7...♘bd7 *(D)*

W



A straightforward and solid defence. Black makes a natural move and anticipates responding to White's ♘c4 by ...♘b6. Although it is not mentioned by *NCO* or *MCO-14*, I am struck by

how effective this move is, and how Black has two routes to equality at several critical junctures. The reader will especially like this solution if he wants to bypass the complications after 7...♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0, dealt with in Line B.

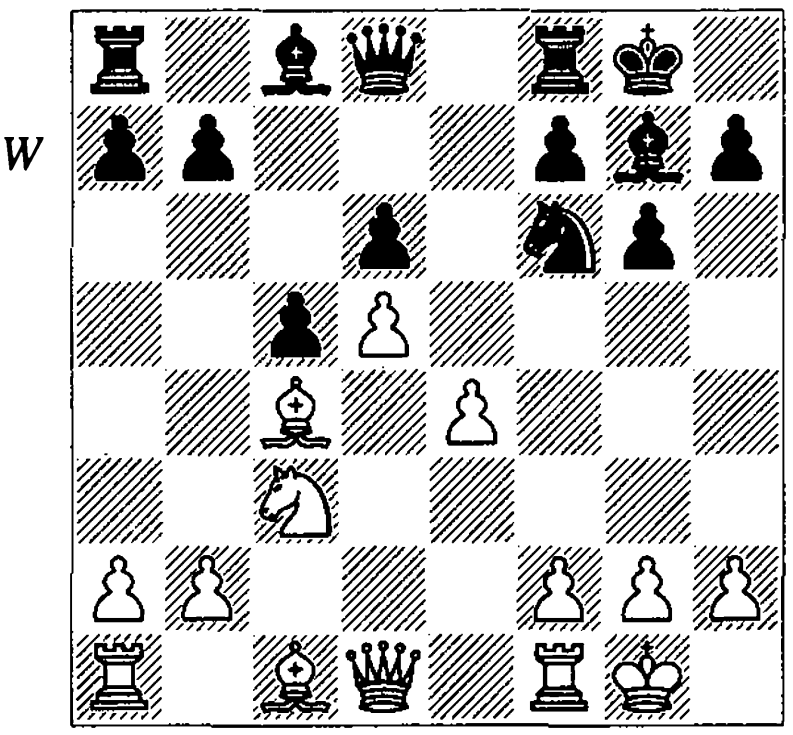
8 e4

To the extent that theory concerns itself with 7...♘bd7, this is considered the most challenging move. It intends, after ♘c4, to meet ...♘b6 with ♘e3 and afterwards, with a4-a5. The natural alternative 8 ♘c4 ♘b6 is a frequent choice in practice, but presents Black with no serious difficulties if he understands the ideas:

a) 9 ♘e3 is logical but a little awkward. White hopes for a4-a5 and a return to c4, but this allows Black to reorganize: 9...♗g7 10 a4 ♗d7 11 a5 ♘c8 12 ♘c4 ♕e7 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗h4 0-0 (14...g5 15 ♗g3 ♘h5 =) 15 e3 ♖b8 ('=' Psakhis and *ECO*), Whiteley-Schweda, Cappelle la Grande 1992. Play might continue 16 ♗e2 b5 17 axb6 axb6 18 0-0 b5 19 ♘a5?! (19 ♕b3 ♘b6 20 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 21 ♖a7 ♖fb8 22 ♖fa1 b4 23 ♘b1 g5 24 ♗g3 ♘e4 25 ♗g4 ♖6b7 =) 19...b4 20 ♘b1 ♕e4 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 with a slight advantage for Black.

b) 9 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 10 e4 ♗g7 11 ♗b5+ ♘d7!? (11...♗d7 =) 12 ♕a4 a6 13 ♗d2 ♕c7 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♗e2 ♖b8 = Al Kazzaz-Chekhov, Caracas U-26 Wcht 1976.

c) 9 e4 ♘xc4 10 ♗xc4 ♗g7 11 0-0 0-0 *(D)* and now:



c1) 12 ♗f4 with some informative examples:

c11) 12...♖e8 13 ♗d3 a6 14 a4 ♘h5! (14...c4!? 15 ♗c2 ♖b8 16 a5 b5 17 axb6 ♕xb6 18 ♗e3 ♕d8 ± Foguelman-Seidler, Buenos Aires 1976) 15 ♗e3 (15 ♗d2?! ♕h4!) 15...♗e5 16 ♕d2 (16 f4 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 f5 is a little better for Black) 16...♗d7 17 a5 (17 f4?! ♗xc3 18 ♕xc3! ♘f6 19 ♕c2 b5 ∓) 17...♕h4! 18 f4 ♗g7 19 ♕e1 ♕xe1 20 ♖axe1 f5 intending to meet 21 exf5?! (21 ♗d2 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♘f6!) with 21...♖xe3! 22 ♖xe3 ♗d4 23 ♘d1 ♖e8 ∓.

c12) 12...a6 13 a4 ♘h5 (13...♘g4 Nunn) 14 ♗e3 ♖e8 (Kapengut suggests 14...f5!? 15 exf5 ♗xf5 with the point that 16 g4?! is met by 16...♕h4) 15 ♕d2 ♖b8 16 ♖fe1 ♕d7! 17 a5 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 ♖ac1 ♕b7 with an equal position, Gligorić-Trifunović, Sombor 1957.

c2) 12 ♗g5 h6 (12...a6! is easier: 13 a4 ♗d7!? {or 13...♖e8 14 ♕d2 h6! 15 ♗xh6 ♘xe4 =} 14 ♕d2 b5! 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 17 ♘xb5 ♖xa1 18 ♖xa1 ♘xe4 19 ♗xd8 ♘xd2 is equal, F.Portisch-Hodgson, Wijk aan Zee 1985) 13 ♗h4 g5!? (or 13...a6 14

a4 ♗d7, with the same idea as 12...a6) 14 ♗g3 a6 15 a4 ♖e8 and now:

c21) 16 ♖e1 ♘g4 17 ♗e2 ♘e5 18 ♕d2 ♘g6 19 ♗h5 ♖b8 20 ♗xg6 fxg6 21 f4, Barbero-A.Schneider, Delmenhorst 1986, and now Hébert suggests 21...gxf4! 22 ♕xf4 ♖e5 23 ♖f1 ♕d7 24 ♖f2 b5 25 ♖af1 b4 26 ♘d1 ♗b7 27 ♘e3 ♖be8 as unclear.

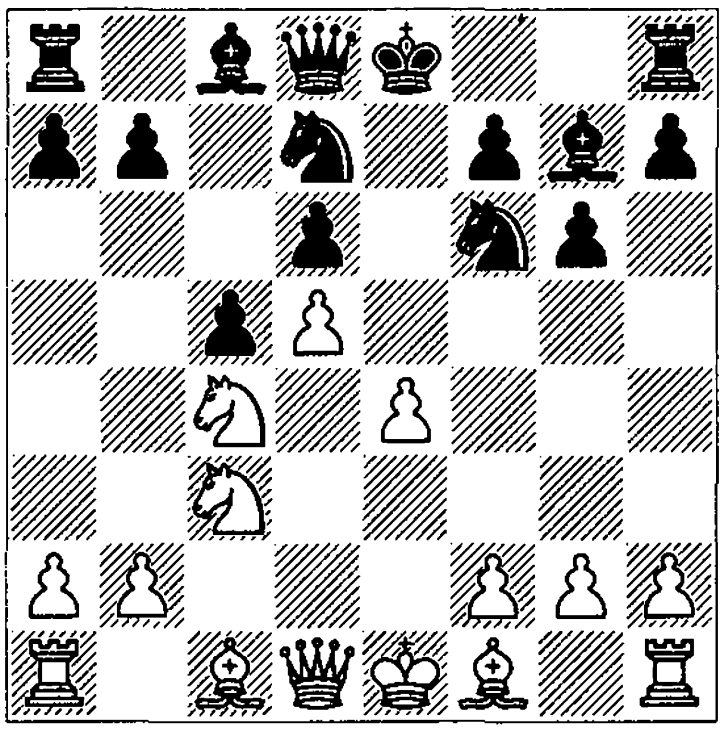
c22) Kapengut analyses 16 ♗d3 ♘g4 17 h3 ♘e5 18 f4 ♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♕b6 20 ♔h2 ♕xb2!? 21 ♖ac1 and now gives 21...c4! 22 ♕xc4 ♗xh3 with "a sharp position with equal chances"; Black holds on in the ending after 23 ♔xh3 ♖ac8 24 ♕a2, etc. But 21...g4! 22 hxg4 ♗xg4 appears better, having in mind 23 f5? ♗xc3! ∓.

8...♗g7 9 ♘c4 *(D)*

For 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8, see Line A of Chapter 10.

9 ♗d3 0-0 10 0-0 is an odd move-order which may transpose to the main line via 10...♖e8 11 ♘c4 ♘b6 12 ♘e3, but can also have independent value if, for example, Black deviates now: 10...♘e5 (or 10...a6 11 a4 ♖e8 12 f4 ♖b8 13 h3 ♕c7 14 ♖f3 c4 15 ♘xc4 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘xd6!? ♕xd6 18 e5 ♖xe5 19 fxe5 ♘xe5 with surprising but speculative compensation for the exchange, Sochor-Simacek, Moravka jr 1994) 11 ♗e2 g5!? (compare the Classical Main Line; in one sense, Black has gained a tempo due to ♗d3-e2, although it's not that easy) 12 ♖e1 ♘g6 13 ♗f1 ♘g4! 14 ♘c4 (14 h3 ♘xf2! 15 ♔xf2 ♗d4+ 16 ♖e3 f5) 14...♗d4 15 ♘e3 ♕f6 = 16 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 17 ♕c2 ♘f4 18 ♗e3 ♗e5! 19 f3 ♗d7 20 ♔h1 ♘g6 21 ♕d2 h6 22 ♗e2 b5! 23 a4 (23 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 24 ♗xb5 ♗xb2 ∓) 23...bxa4 24 ♘xa4 ♗xa4 25 ♖xa4 ♖fb8 ∓ with the customary queenside pressure, Barstatis-Etruk, Leningrad 1962.

B



9...♘b6

The almost unknown 9...♕e7!? may be another acceptable solution here. Here's a short overview:

a) 10 ♕e2 is one of the few moves actually tried here: 10...0-0 11 ♗f4 ♘e8 12 g3 b6 13 a4 (13 ♘b5 ♘e5 =) 13...♗a6 (13...g5!? 14 ♗d2 ♗a6) 14 ♘b5 ♘e5 15 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 16 f4 (16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 f4 ♕e7) 16...♗d4!? (16...♗xb5 17 axb5 ♗d4 18 e5 ♖d8 19 ♗g2 dxe5 20 fxe5 f6! 21 e6 ♘d6 22 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 followed by ...f5 is complex) 17 ♘xd4?! (17 ♗g2 ♗xb5 18 axb5 ♘c7) 17...cxd4 18 ♖d1?? ♗xc4 0-1 Andruet – Santo-Roman, Epinal 1986.

b) 10 ♗d3!? looks natural, but shouldn't intimidate anyone: 10...0-0 11 0-0 ♘e5! 12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 13 ♕f3 (13 h3 a6 14 a4 ♖e8 =; 13 f4 ♕d4+ 14 ♔h1 ♗g4!) 13...♕e7 (or 13...♘d7 14

♗f4 ♕e7) 14 ♗f4 (14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗h4 g5 16 ♗g3 ♗g4 17 ♕e3 ♘h5 =) 14...♘h5 15 ♗e3 f5!? (15...a6 16 a4 ♕h4 also looks effective) 16 ♖ae1 fxe4 17 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♗f5 =.

c) 10 ♗e2 is the move Schneider gives as favouring White: 10...0-0 11 f3, and now 11...♘e5 12 ♘e3 a6 13 a4 ♖b8 14 0-0 was probably somewhat better for White in Gorelov-Khasin, Moscow 1978, but a direct solution is 11...♘e8! 12 0-0 f5 13 exf5 ♖xf5 14 f4 (14 ♗d3 can be met by 14...♗d4+ 15 ♔h1 ♖h5! threatening ...♖xh2+, or even 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♖xd5) 14...♖f8 15 ♗g4 ♘b6 =.

d) The untried 10 ♗f4 is critical, since the ending after 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 12 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 13 ♗xe2 0-0 is double-edged. I think that Black holds his own after 14 0-0-0! (14 ♗xd6 ♖e8 =) 14...♘b6!? (14...♗d4!?) and now:

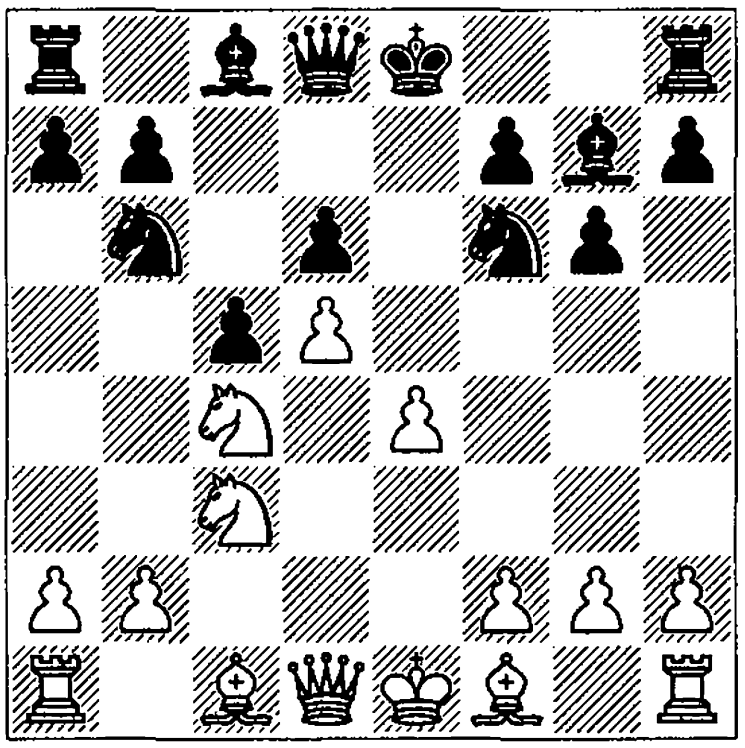
d1) 15 ♘xb6? axb6 16 ♗xd6 ♖d8 17 ♗c7 ♗f5! 18 g4 (18 ♗xd8? fails to 18...♗h6+ 19 ♖d2 ♖xa2) 18...♗h6+ 19 f4 ♖d7 ∓.

d2) 15 ♗xd6 ♖d8 and now 16 ♗xc5? ♘xd5 looks equal at first, but it's very hard to defend White's king in the face of ...♗e6 and ...♖ac8; e.g., 17 ♗f3 ♗e6 18 ♘d6 ♖ac8! 19 ♘xb7 ♖xc5+ 20 ♘xc5 ♖c8 ∓. Therefore White should play 16 ♗c7, when 16...♗h6+ intending 17 ♔b1 ♖xd5 or 17 f4 ♖e8 is equal, or Black might keep more play on the board by 16...♖e8 =.

d3) 15 ♘xd6 ♖d8!? (leading to dynamic play; also possible is simply 15...♗d4) 16 ♗f3 (this move looks very strong, but Black has resources; instead 16 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 17 d6 ♗d4 is equal; e.g., 18 ♗g3 {or 18 ♖d2 h6! 19 ♗d3 ♘d5 20 ♗g3 ♘f6 21 ♖e1 ♘e8, leading to equality} 18...a6 19 ♖he1 ♖d7 20 ♗f3 ♖cd8 21 ♗h4!? f6 22 ♗g3 ♔f8! = intending ...♘c8 or ...♘c4) 16...♖xd6! (the point) 17 ♗xd6 ♘c4 18 ♗f4! (18 ♗xc5?! ♗f5! 19 ♖df1 ♖c8! ∓) 18...♗f5!; e.g., 19 ♖de1 ♘xb2 20 ♗e2 ♘a4 (20...c4!? 21 d6 ♘a4 22 ♗f3 ♘c5) 21 d6 ♗b2+ 22 ♔d1 ♘c3+ 23 ♔d2 ♘d5 with good prospects.

If 9...♕e7 holds up, then it would reinforce the overall ineffectiveness of White's set-up.

We now return to 9...♘b6 *(D)*:



10 ♘e3

This poses more problems than 10 ♗g5; for example, 10...♘xc4 11 ♗xc4 h6 12 ♗h4 0-0 13 0-0 a6 14 a4 ♗d7!? 15 ♖e1 ♕b6! 16 ♕c2 (16 ♖b1 ♘h5 =) 16...g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 a5 ♕c7 19 e5! dxe5 (19...♘xg3 20 exd6 ♕xd6 21 hxg3 f5 =) 20 d6 ♕xd6 21 ♖ad1 ♕c6 22 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♖xe5 ♖ae8 = I.Ivanov-Kudrin, New York 1983.

10...0-0 11 ♗d3

Or:

a) 11 a4 is well met by 11...♗d7!? (or 11...♖e8 12 a5 ♘bd7 13 ♗d3 ♘e5 =) 12 a5 ♘c8 13 ♗d3 ♖e8 14 0-0 b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 =.

b) 11 ♗e2 ♕e7! 12 ♕c2 ♗d7 13 a4 ♖ae8 and now, instead of 14 a5'?', as played in Anishchenko-Mochalov, Minsk 1974, Kapengut suggests 14 ♗f3 h5 (14...♘xe4!? 15 ♘xe4 f5) 15 h3 ♘h7 ∓.

11...♖e8

The normal move, but the alternatives aren't bad, and line 'b' is particularly intriguing:

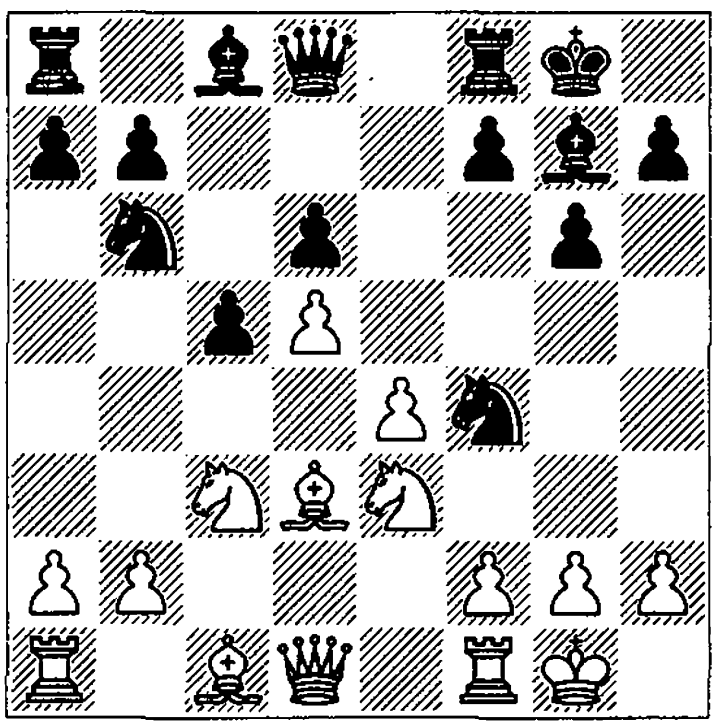
a) 11...♘fd7 12 0-0 (12 f4 ♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕e7 14 0-0 ♗d4 and now 15 ♔g2 ♘f6 or 15 ♖e1 ♘f6 16 ♘b5 ♗g4 17 ♕d2 ♗f3 18 ♘xd4 cxd4 is equal) 12...♘e5 13 ♗e2 f5 14 exf5!? (14 f4 ♘f7 15 exf5 gxf5 and now, instead of 16 ♔h1 ♗d7, Reeh-Bilek, Kecskemet 1990, I think that White retains a small edge after 16 ♗d3! ♘h6 17 ♕h5 ♕f6 ±) 14...gxf5 15 f4 ♘g6 16 ♘c4 ♘xc4 17 ♗xc4 a6 18 a4 ♕f6 = Valette-Lecuyer, Chartres 1990 (or 18...♖e8 =).

b) 11...♘h5 is underrated:

b1) 12 g3 ♗h3!? 13 a4 (Kapengut queries Black's last move owing to 13 ♕f3 intending g4, but then 13...♘d7 looks good; e.g., 14 g4? ♘e5, 14 ♘c4 f5! or 14 ♕e2 ♗xc3+! 15 bxc3 ♕f6 intending ...♘e5) 13...♖e8 14 a5 ♘d7 =.

b2) After 12 0-0, the famous encounter Nimzowitsch-Marshall, New York 1927 continued 12...♗e5 13 a4 ♘f4 14 a5 ♘d7 15 ♘c4 with White having a slight positional edge (although Hébert shows that even the course of the game was OK for Black). I think that 12...♘f4! *(D)* is better:

W

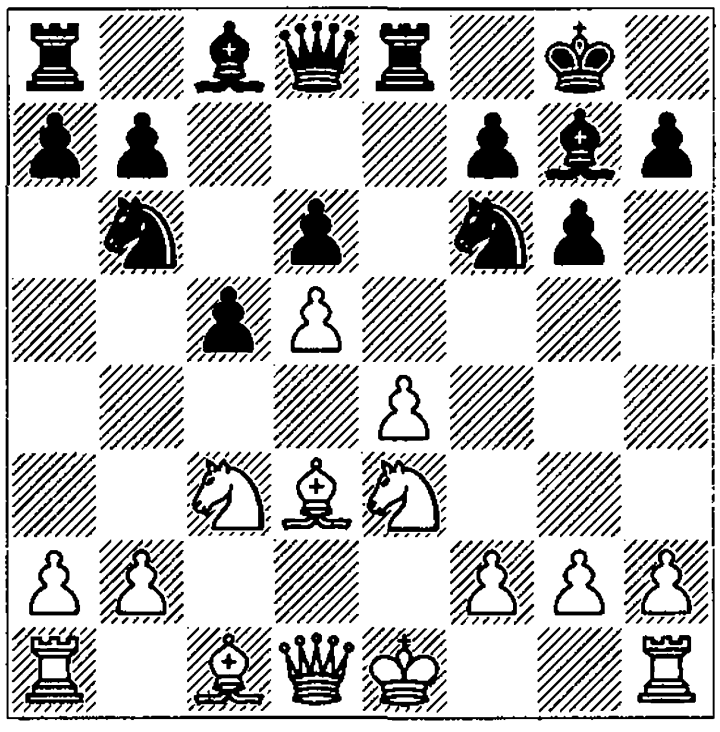


b21) 13 a4 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♖e8 15 a5 ♘d7 16 f4 ♗d4 and now 17 ♔h1 ♘f6 is old analysis by Nunn, who suggested that White was still better, but Black is threatening ...♗xc3 and has a great game; for example, 18 ♘ed1 ♘xe4! 19 ♘xe4 ♗f5 20 ♖e1 ♕e7 ∓. Instead, 17 ♘b5 is strongly met by 17...♗xe3+! 18 ♗xe3 ♘f6, in view of 19 ♘c3?! ♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗f5 21 ♖a4 ♕e7 −+.

b22) 13 ♔h1 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 f5!? 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♘xf5 ♖xf5, contemplating ...♗xc3, leaves Black at least equal.

b23) 13 ♗c2 (I think that this makes the most sense) 13...♖e8 14 ♕f3 (14 ♗d2 ♕h4!?) 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♕f6 16 ♖b1 ♘h3+! 17 ♔h1 ♕xf3 18 gxf3 ♘f4 (18...♘g5!?) 19 ♘f5 ♗xf5 20 ♗xf4 ♘xd5! 21 ♗xd6! ♘xc3 22 exf5 ♘xb1 23 ♖xb1 b6 gives Black adequate chances due to White's horrid pawn-structure.

We now return to 11...♖e8 *(D)*:



12 0-0 ♗d7!?

This is an experimental deviation from theory. According to Schneider, 12...c4 13 ♗c2 ♗d7 leads to equal play. Perhaps true, but it's a little awkward and I don't like to commit to an early ...c4 in positions like this.

Several books feature Kapengut's 12...♘bd7 13 a4 a6:

a) 14 f4 c4! 15 ♘xc4 (15 ♗c2!? ♘c5 16 ♕f3 ♘b3! is unclear according to Kapengut; things look equal after 17 ♗xb3 cxb3 intending ...♕e7 or ...♕b6) 15...♘c5 is cited as 'unclear' according to Nikolaev. At first I was sceptical, but I think that Black has full compensation: 16 ♕f3 (16 ♕c2 ♘g4 17 g3 f5; 16 ♖e1? ♘g4 17 g3? ♗d4+ 18 ♗e3 ♘xe3 19 ♘xe3 ♕b6 −+; 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘xd5 {Kapengut} 18 ♗xg6?! ♗e6! 19 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 20 ♖xf7 ♘xc3 21 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 22 ♕g4+ ♔h8 23 bxc3 ♖g8 ultimately favours Black) 16...♘g4! 17 ♗c2 ♗d4+ 18 ♘e3 f5! ∓.

b) Perhaps 14 a5 is better; then Kapengut gives 14...♘e5 15 ♗e2! g5 16 h3 ♘g6 ±, although after 17 ♕c2 ♘f4 18 ♘c4 ♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 h6 (20 f4 g4), I'm not sure that Black is really worse.

13 a4 ♖b8 14 a5 ♘c8

We shall encounter this type of position elsewhere. Black's pieces all exert influence, and he is ready for action on the queenside. For example...

15 f4 ♕c7 16 ♖e1

16 ♕f3 b5 17 axb6 axb6 (the alternative 17...♘xb6 18 ♗d2 c4 19 ♗c2 ♕c5 20 ♔h1 is playable but less attractive) 18 ♗d2 b5 19 ♖fc1 c4 20 ♗b1 ♕c5 with excellent activity.

16...b5

More direct than 16...a6!? with the idea ...♘a7.

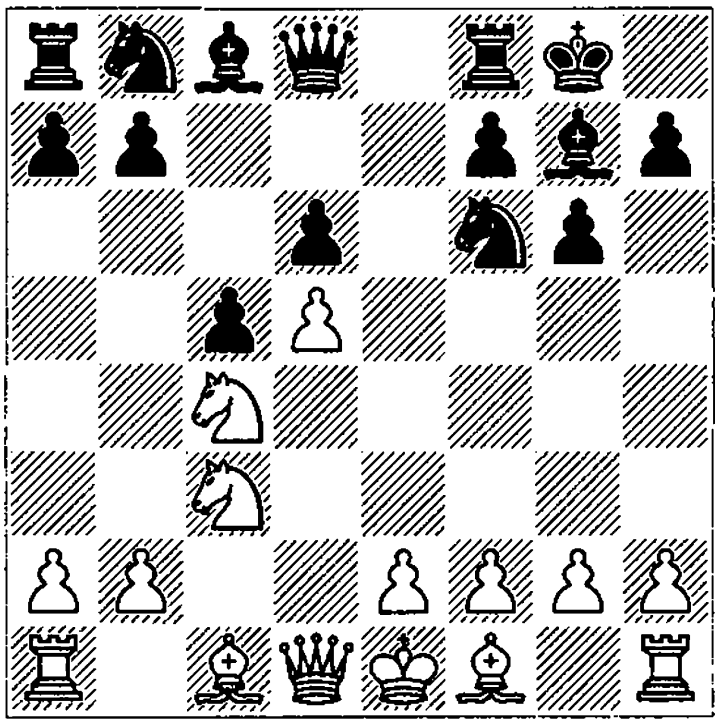
17 axb6 axb6

The game is equal. Black will play ...b5, since White cannot occupy b5 without ceding the e4-pawn.

The nice thing about 7...♘bd7 is that Black has alternatives along the way. Even the obscure 9...♕e7!? looks interesting.

B)

7...♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 *(D)*



This is the traditional main line. White will try to pressure the d-pawn. He begins with:

B1: 9 ♗f4 65
B2: 9 ♗g5 67

Or:

a) 9 e4 allows an immediate central counterattack: 9...♖e8 (or 9...b5 10 ♘xb5 ♘xe4) 10 ♗d3 and now:

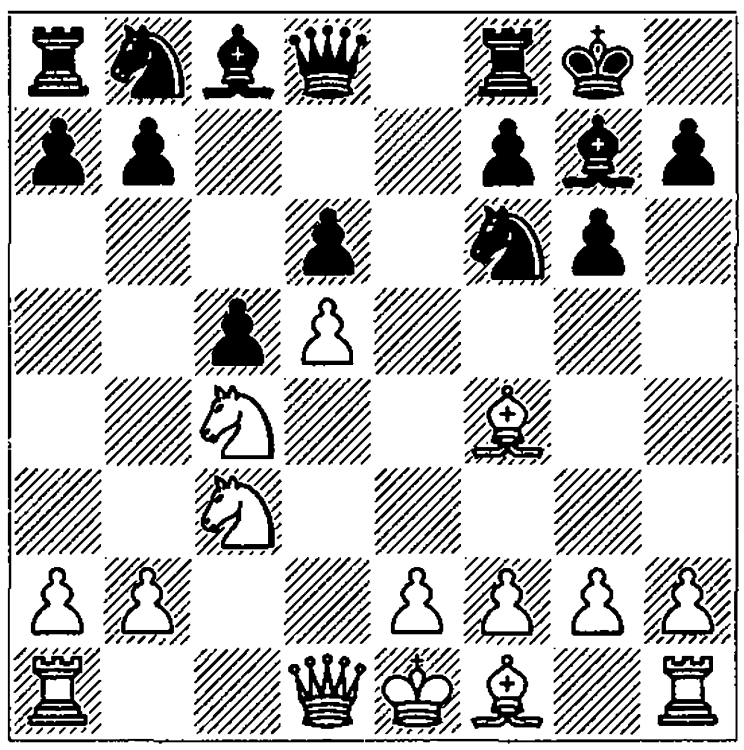
a1) 10...b5?! should be met not by 11 ♘d2? a6 12 0-0 c4 13 ♗c2 ♘bd7 ∓ Junquera-J.Lopez, Spanish Cht 1990, but 11 ♘xb5! ♘xe4 12 0-0 a6 13 ♘ba3 ♘f6 14 ♗f4 ±.

a2) 10...♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 f5 is best; e.g., 12 ♗f4 fxe4 13 ♗c2 ♕f6! ∓ with the point 14 ♘xd6 ♖d8 15 ♘xc8 ♕xf4 −+.

b) 9 g3 has recently become the most popular move, probably because White doesn't get much from the main lines. The idea is to get a form of the Fianchetto Systems of Chapter 6, while bypassing some of the problems there. However, the early positioning of the knight on c4 can be committal, and attack by ...b6 and ...♗a6 tends to disrupt White's plans. In fact, I like the direct way Black played in Sadler-Ward, British Ch (Nottingham) 1996: 9...b6 (similar ...b6-based lines are 9...♘a6 10 ♗g2 ♘c7 11 0-0 ♘fe8 12 a4 b6 13 ♖e1 ♗a6 14 ♘a3 f5 = Buhmann-Loetscher, Oropesa del Mar 1999, and 9...♕e7 10 ♗g2 ♘bd7 11 ♗f4 ♘e8 12 ♕d2 b6 13 a4 ♗a6 14 ♘b5 ♘e5 = Delemarre-Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 2000, when 15 ♕e3 f6 16 h4 ♗xb5 17 axb5 ♘c7 = would be a sample line) 10 a4 ♘e8 11 ♗g2 ♘d7 12 0-0 ♗a6 13 ♘a3 (13 ♘b5 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 = 15 f4? ♗g7 16 e4? ♗xb5 17 axb5 ♘c7 ∓ with the idea that 18 ♕b3 is answered by 18...♕d7) 13...f5 (always a useful space-gaining move in positions where ♘e6 is not on the cards) 14 ♗d2 ♘e5 = 15 ♕c1 ♘f6 16 ♗h6 ♕d7 17 ♖a2 ♗xh6! 18 ♕xh6 ♘h5 (threatening ...f4 and ...♘f7) 19 ♕c1 f4! 20 ♘ab5 h6!? (20...♗b7!) 21 b3 ♖f7 22 ♘e4! ♗xb5 23 axb5 ♖d8 (threatening ...♕xb5) 24 ♕c3 ♘f6 25 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 26 ♖fa1!? (26 gxf4 ♖xf4 27 ♗h3! =) 26...♕xb5 27 gxf4 ♖xf4 28 e3? (28 ♕e3! =) 28...♖b4 29 f4 ♖xb3 30 ♕c2 ♘d3 31 ♖xa7 c4 32 ♖c7 ♕e8! −+.

B1)
9 ♗f4 *(D)*

B



9...♘e8

I think that a very close examination of the pawn sacrifices initiated by 9...b6, 9...♘a6 and 9...♘bd7 leads one to the conclusion that none of them are quite sound (*ECO*, *NCO*, and most alternative sources to the contrary).

Schneider gives the very best coverage of these moves, although his presentation of the same pawn sacrifices after 9 ♗g5 h6 10 ♗f4 (which are also dubious) is inconsistent. In any case, I don't want to suggest such a committal course unless I have confidence in it.

But there is nothing wrong with 9...♘e8, which has a 30 or 40 year history of soundness. Black prepares ...b6 and ...♗a6, as well as the space-gaining ...f5. It also turns out that White's direct attempts to win the d-pawn tend to fail in dramatic fashion.

10 ♕d2

Or:

a) 10 ♘e4? b5 11 ♘cxd6 ♘xd6 12 ♗xd6 ♖e8 –+.

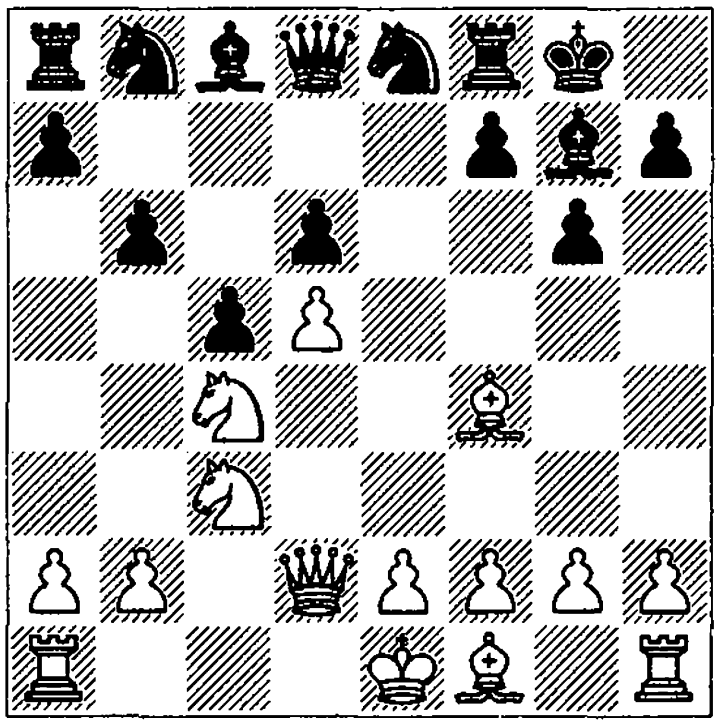
b) 10 e4 f5! – Nunn.

c) 10 ♘b5?! ♗d7! 11 ♘bxd6 b5 12 ♘xe8 (12 ♘d2 ♕f6 13 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 14 ♗xb8 ♖axb8 ∓) 12...♗xe8 13 ♘e5 ♕d6 14 ♘d3 ♕xd5 ∓ Psakhis.

d) 10 e3 is solid but a little slow: 10...g5! (or 10...♘a6 11 ♗e2 ♘ac7 12 a4 b6 13 0-0 ♗a6 14 ♕b3 {14 e4 f5! Barsov-Galje, Haarlem 1998} 14...g5! 15 ♗g3 f5 =) 11 ♗g3 f5 12 ♕d2 ♕e7 (12...♗xc3!? 13 bxc3 b5 14 ♘b2 ♕e7 is unclear) 13 f4 (13 ♗e2 ♘d7 14 0-0 {14 h4 g4 =} 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♘df6 16 f3 b6) 13...gxf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘d7 15 ♗d3 ♘e5 16 0-0 ♗d7 ('∓' Schneider; maybe just =) 17 e4? (17 ♘xe5 dxe5 18 ♗g3 ♘d6 =) 17...♘xd3 18 ♕xd3 b5 19 ♘d2 b4 20 ♘e2 fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗f5 22 ♘2g3 ♗g6 and Black has a slight advantage, Renaze-Bouaziz, Cannes 1997.

10...b6 *(D)*

11 a4



11 e3 ♗a6 12 a4 transposes to the main line. Again, direct attacks on the d-pawn don't achieve much:

a) 11 ♘b5 ♗a6 12 a4 (12 ♘bxd6 ♘xd6 13 ♘xd6 transposes to line 'b') 12...♗xb5 13 axb5 ♘d7!? 14 ♘xd6 (14 ♖a6 ♘df6) 14...♘xd6 15 ♗xd6 ♖e8. Here Black has very active pieces and White is underdeveloped: 16 ♗g3 (16 e3 ♘f6 17 ♗g3 ♘e4 18 ♕c2 ♘xg3 19 hxg3 ♕xd5 ∓) 16...♖e4!? (16...♘f6 is also promising; e.g., 17 ♖d1 ♘e4 18 ♕c2 and now 18...♗d4! or 18...h5) 17 e3 ♖b4 18 ♖a2 ♘f6 19 d6 ♘e4 20 ♕d3 (20 ♕c2 ♘xg3 21 hxg3 ♕xd6) 20...♕d7, intending ...♕e6 or just ...♖d8, gives Black more than enough compensation.

b) 11 ♘e4 ♗a6 12 ♘cxd6 ♘xd6 13 ♘xd6 (13 ♗xd6 ♖e8 14 ♗xb8 ♖xe4 ∓) 13...g5 14 ♗g3 (14 ♘xf7!? ♖xf7 15 ♗xg5 ♕d6 16 g3 and now, instead of the greedy 16...♗xb2? as in Lorbek-Strbad, corr. 1992, Black keeps a pleasant advantage with 16...♗d4!) 14...f5 15 e4 ♗xf1 16 ♖xf1 f4 17 ♘f5 fxg3 ∓. White has some but not enough compensation for the piece.

11...♗a6 12 e3

12 ♘b5 ♗xb5 13 axb5 f5 leads to equality: 14 h4 (14 e3 ♖f7 15 ♗e2 a6) 14...♗f6 15 e3 ♖f7 16 ♗e2 a6! 17 bxa6 ♖fa7 =. A resource to remember.

12...f5

This move allows Black to gain a tempo in comparison to 12...♗xc4 if White plays 13 ♗e2.

13 h4

Or:

a) 13 ♗e2 ♕f6 (threatening ...g5 and ...f4) 14 ♗g3 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 0-0 ♘d7 = Osnos-Forintos, Leningrad-Budapest 1962.

b) 13 ♗g3?! ♕e7! (threatening ...f4) 14 f4? (14 0-0-0 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♔b1 ♘d7 17 ♖he1 b5! 18 axb5 ♘c7 gives Black a serious attack) 14...♗xc3!? (14...♘c7! ∓; 14...♘f6 15 ♗h4 ♖e8, Burnett-Nunn, Oxford 1972, and now White should try 16 ♘b5) 15 bxc3 ♕e4 16 ♘b2 ♗xf1 17 ♖xf1 ♘f6 ∓.

13...♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 ♕e2

15 ♗e2 ♘d7 ('∓' *ECO*) 16 e4 (better is 16 ♗g5!, when 16...♕c7 17 g4 is double-edged and after 16...♗f6 17 ♗h6, 17...♖f7!? {with the point 18 h5 g5!} tries to avoid the repetition 17...♗g7 18 ♗g5, etc.) 16...fxe4 17 h5 ♘df6 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♖h3 ♕d7 20 0-0-0 b5! 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♗xb5 ♕f5 23 ♗e3 ♘g4 ∓ Farago-Velimirović, Amsterdam 1976.

15...♘f6 16 ♗d3

'±' – Kapengut's annotation, but I doubt it.

16...♘h5!?

Perhaps this is better than the previously-played 16...♖a7!? 17 g3!? ♘g4 18 ♔f1 (18 0-0 ♖e8! 19 ♕c2 ♘e5 20 ♗e2 ♘bd7 =) Borisenko-Boleslavsky, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1961; then 18...♘e5! 19 ♗c2 ♘f7 20 ♔g2 ♖e8 = is best.

For a third option, 16...♖e8 is solid.

17 ♗g5

17 ♗h2 is met by 17...♕xh4.

17...♕d7!

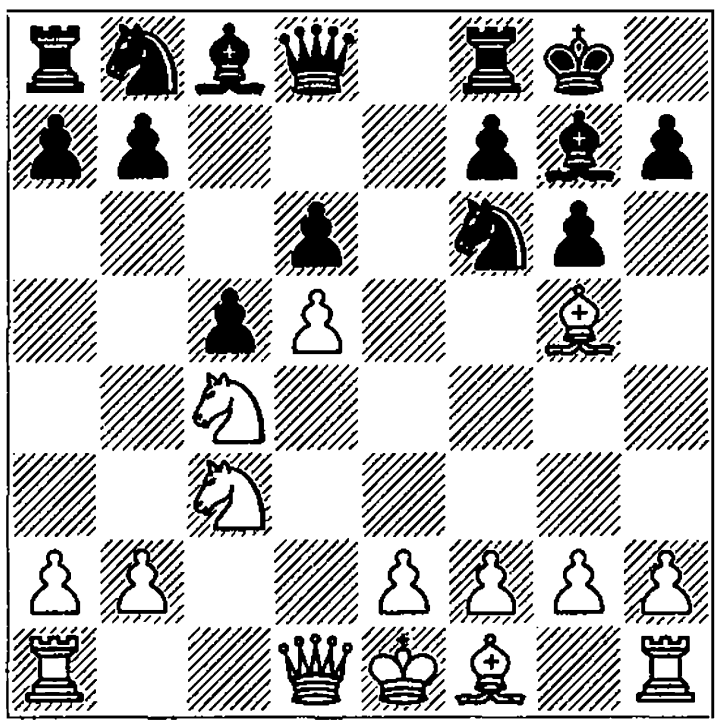
The idea is to chase the bishop by ...h6 while keeping an eye on g4 and discouraging 0-0-0 in view of the a-pawn. 17...♕e8 has the same idea of ...h6. Then a possible continuation is 18 ♕c2! ♘d7 19 ♗e2 f4! 20 ♗g4! fxe3 21 ♗e6+ ♔h8 22 ♗xe3 ♘f4 23 ♗xf4 ♖xf4, and Black answers both 24 h5 and 24 ♘e4 with 24...♘f8!.

After the text-move (17...♕d7), a likely continuation is 18 ♕c2 ♕f7 19 ♘e2 ♘d7, when Black has no worries.

B2)

9 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



This move is considerably more popular than 9 ♗f4, because the simple solution in the last section is not

available (see note 'a2' below). Left alone, White might play ♕d2-f4. From Black's point of view, he can be happy that he has quite a bit more leeway in defence. I will recommend two continuations:

B21: 9...♕d7!? 68
B22: 9...♕e7 70

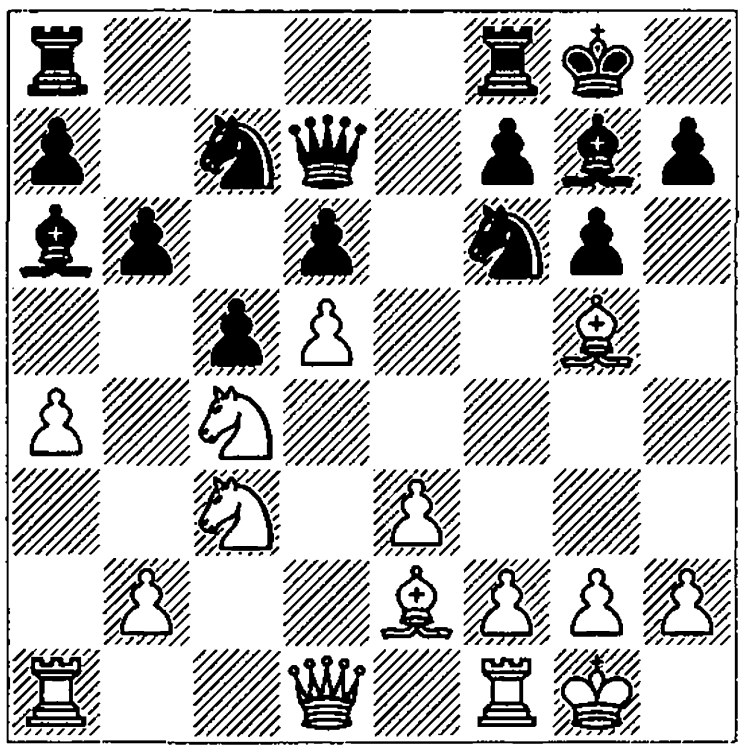
Here are thoughts on two other ideas:

a) I admit that I like the popular 9...h6 for White after 10 ♗f4 since the pawn sacrifices mentioned in Line B1 still fall short, in my opinion.

a1) In that context, I should mention that 10...♘a6!? 11 ♕d2 b5, leading to complex play after 12 ♘xb5 ♘e4 in the often-quoted game Kaplun-Kapengut, Rostov 1980, is well answered by 12 ♘xd6! b4 (12...♘h5 13 ♘dxb5; 12...♗d7 13 e3 {or even 13 e4} 13...b4 14 ♘ce4) 13 ♘cb5 (13 ♘d1!?) 13...♗d7 (13...g5 14 ♗g3 ♘h5 15 ♘xc8 ♘xg3 16 hxg3 ♕xc8 17 e3) 14 e4!.

a2) Thus, Black should probably be content with 10...♘e8, when the difference between this and the last section is 11 ♕c1! g5 (11...♔h7 is met by 12 a4! with the idea ♘b5, and not 12 ♘b5 ♗d7!, which I suggested in my book, and gives Black good play) 12 ♗d2, intending h4. Theory is divided, but I think that this is very uncomfortable for Black.

b) 9...♘a6 may be underestimated: 10 e3 ♘c7 11 a4 b6 12 ♗e2 ♗a6 13 0-0 ♕d7 *(D)* and then:



b1) 14 b3 ♕f5!? (14...♘fe8 15 ♖c1 f5 16 ♗f3 ♗b7! is also fine) 15 ♗f4 ♘cxd5 16 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 = 17 ♗xd6 ♖fe8 18 ♗f3 ♕xd1 19 ♖fxd1 ♘e4 with balanced play.

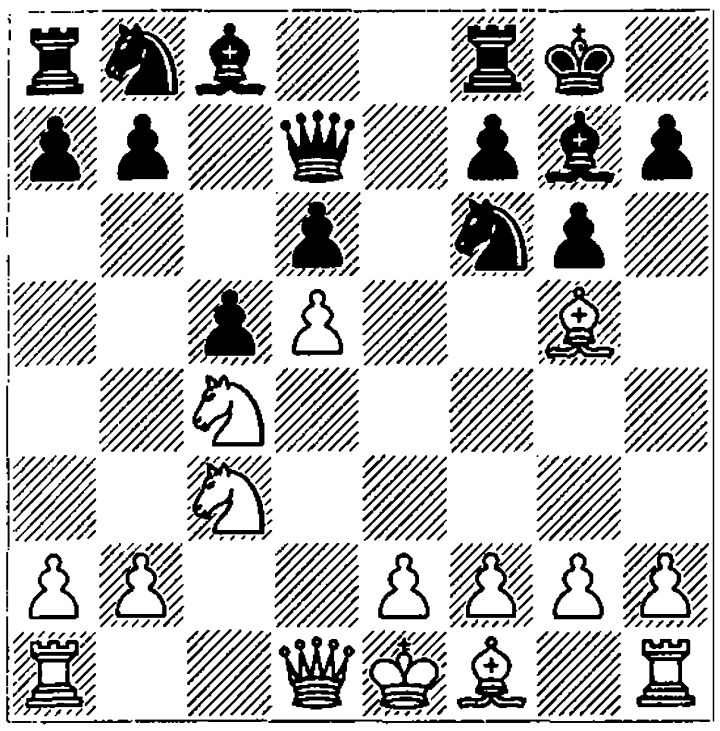
b2) 14 h3 ♖fe8 15 ♖c1 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4, Portisch-Ionescu, Moscow OL 1994, and now Ionescu gives 16...♘e4 =, which looks rather promising for Black in view of lines like 17 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♕c2 ♖ae8 19 f3 (19 ♗f4 a6) 19...♖4e5 20 ♗f4 ♖xd5! 21 ♗xd5 (21 g4 a6! and ...b5) 21...♘xd5 22 ♖fe1 ♘xf4 23 exf4 ♗d4+ 24 ♔f1 ♗e3! ∓.

b3) 14 e4!? (wasting a tempo seems a bit strange, but White is not happy with his restricted centre) 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♕f3 (16 ♕e2 ♘g4 17 h3 ♘e5 18 ♗b3 f5 19 exf5 gxf5!? 20 f4 ♘g6 = Gil Capape-Suba, Ponferrada 1992) 16...♘g4 17 ♗e2 f5 (or 17...♘e5 18 ♕g3 f6 19 ♗e3 f5 20 exf5 ♕xf5) 18 exf5 gxf5 with equality, Ehlvest-Ionescu, Moscow OL 1994.

B21)

9...♕d7!? *(D)*

I give this relatively untested solution for its ingenuity as well as its merit. Black escapes the pin on his

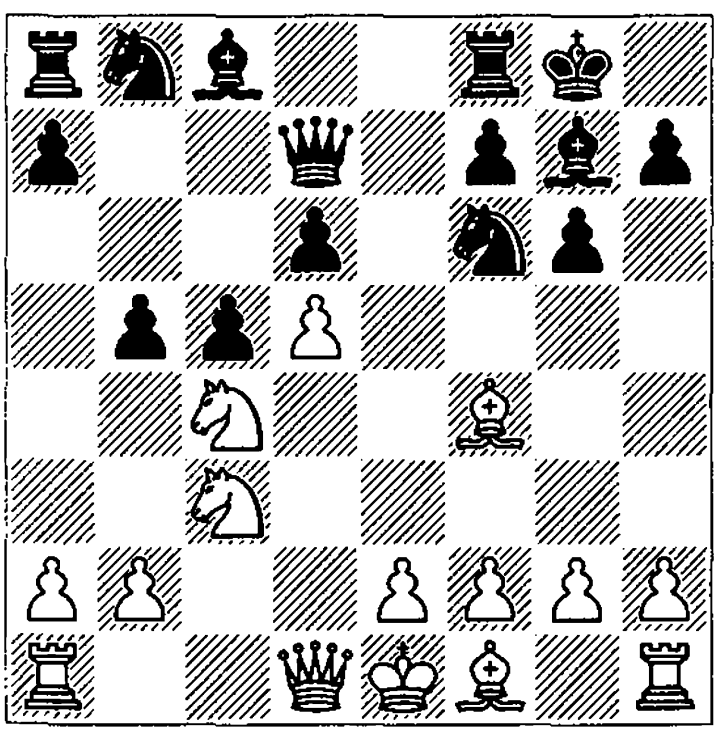


f6-knight, prepares ...b5, and has the tactical ideas of ...♕g4 or ...♕f5 at the right point.

10 a4

White decides that his first priority is to prevent ...b5. Others:

a) After 10 ♗f4!?, Hébert invests some intelligent analysis on 10...♘e8, but 10...b5! *(D)* is more in the spirit of this line:



11 ♘xd6 ♘h5 12 ♕d2 g5! 13 ♗e5! ♗xe5 (or 13...f6!? 14 ♘xc8 fxe5 15 d6 { 15 ♕xg5 ♘f6 and one has to like Black} 15...♖xc8 16 ♕d5+ ♔h8 17 ♕xa8 ♘c6) 14 ♕xg5+ ♗g7 15 ♘xc8 ♘f6 16 e4 (16 ♘xb5 ♘e4!) 16...♕xc8 17 ♗xb5 (17 e5 ♕g4) 17...♕b7! 18 0-0-0 ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♕xb5 20 ♘f6+ ♔h8 21 ♕f5 ♕c4+ 22 ♔b1 ♕h4 leaves Black at least equal, one surprising line being 23 ♘g4? ♘d7! 24 ♕xd7? f5 25 ♘e3 ♕b4! –+.

b) 10 e3 b5 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘e4 ♗g7 13 ♘cd2 (13 ♘cxd6 f5! 14 ♗xb5 ♕d8 15 ♘xc8 fxe4 16 d6 ♕a5+ ∓) 13...♗b7 14 a4 a6 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 17 ♘f3 ♗xb2 18 ♕b1 (18 ♕b3 ♗g7 19 ♗xb5 ♗xd5!) 18...♗xd5 19 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 20 ♘f6+ ♔h8 21 ♘xd5 ♕a5+ 22 ♘d2 ♗g7 23 ♕c2 c4 with a winning position for Black, N.Michaelsen-Lautier, Hamburg 1986.

10...♘a6

Now that the b4-square is free.

11 e3

Or:

a) In comparison with the previous note, 11 ♗f4 ♘e8 appears less demanding for Black, who has ...♘b4 in reserve. Then after 12 ♘b5, 12...♘b4! 13 ♘bxd6 ♘xd6 14 ♗xd6 ♗xb2! is fine, among others.

b) 11 ♕d2 ♘b4 12 f3!? (Laren-S.Wolff, corr. 1990) and now 12...♘e8! would anticipate 13 e4 f5!.

11...♘b4 12 ♗e2 ♕f5!

One of the points of 9...♕d7: to hit g5 and c2 at the same time.

13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 0-0 ♕e7 15 ♕d2

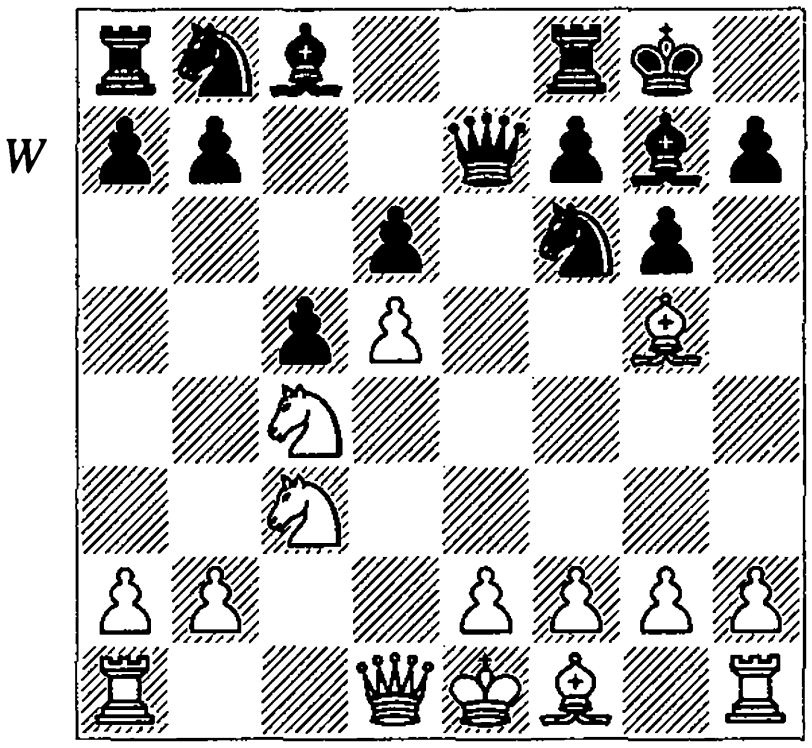
Black is equal after 15 ♖c1 ♗d7 or 15...♗f5.

After the text-move (15 ♕d2), the game Popov-Romanishin, Stara Pazova 1988 continued 15...b6 (15...♗f5!?) 16 ♘a2 ♘xa2 17 ♖xa2 ♗a6!? (better

is 17...♗b7! 18 a5 b5 19 a6 ♗xa6 20 ♖xa6 bxc4 with at least equality) 18 b3 ♖ab8 19 ♖c1 ♗b7 20 ♗f3 ♖fd8 with about equal chances (...♗c8 follows).

B22)

9...♕e7 *(D)*



This, our second repertoire move, is one of the most frequent answers to 9 ♗g5. Black refuses to create a weakness by ...h6, and prepares moves like ...♘bd7 and/or ...b6 and ...♗a6.

10 ♕d2!

The most challenging move. 10 e3 is not so ambitious: 10...♘bd7 (10...b6 is a sound alternative) 11 ♗e2 ♘e5 and then:

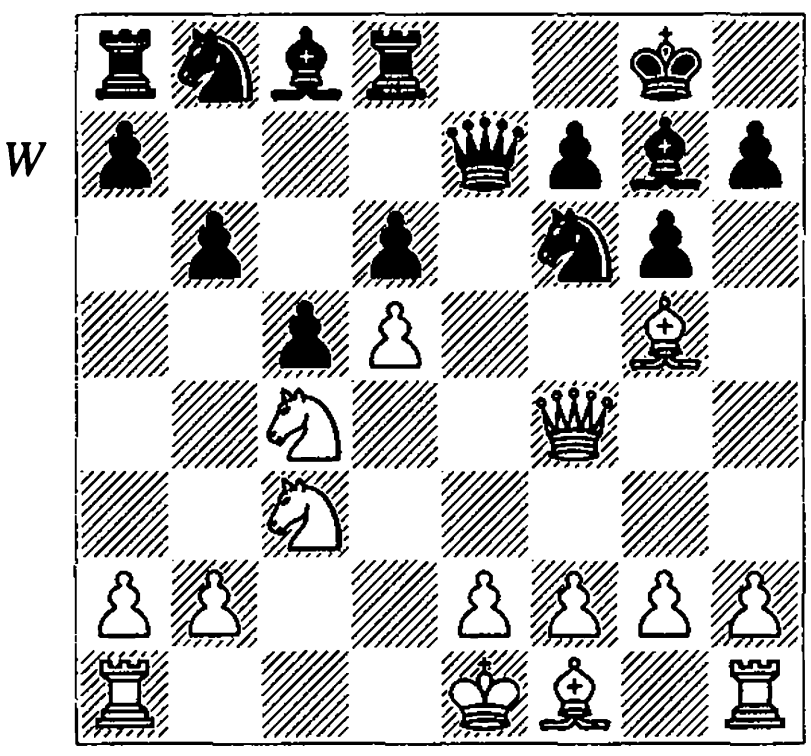
a) 12 ♘d2 is slow, and well met by 12...h6 13 ♗h4 a6 14 a4 ♖e8 15 0-0 ♖b8 = (or 15...♕c7; or even 15...♗d7 16 h3 ♖ab8, since 17 f4 is met by 17...♘d3!).

b) 12 ♘xe5 12...♕xe5 13 ♗f4 ♕e7 14 0-0 ♗f5 15 ♖c1 a6 16 a4 ♖fb8 17 h3 ♗d7 = intending ...b5, Gulko-Wahls, Groningen 1990.

10...b6

The controversial 10...♘bd7!? 11 ♕f4 ♘e5 12 ♘e4 ♗f5 is too complex to analyse here. The stem game went 13 ♘cxd6 ♗xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘ed7 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6! 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 17 0-0-0 ♖fd8 18 e4 ♘xe4 19 ♖e1 !? f5 20 g4? ♕h4! 21 ♖g1 c4! with active play, N.Michaelsen-Palkovi, Eger 1987. However, this looks awfully speculative at best.

11 ♕f4 ♖d8 *(D)*



12 0-0-0

Or:

a) 12 ♘e4 ♕xe4 13 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xd8 b5 (given by Yusupov as unclear) 15 f3 bxc4 16 fxe4 ♗xb2 17 ♖b1 c3 18 ♗g5 ♘d7 19 ♗c1 ♘f6 leaves Black at least equal, with the point 20 ♗xb2? ♖b8 – Schneider.

b) 12 f3 ♗a6 13 e4 b5 14 ♘d2 b4 15 ♘d1 h6 16 ♗xf6 (16 ♗xh6 ♘h5 17 ♕g5 ♗f6 18 ♕e3 ♗d4 =) 16...♗xf6 17 ♕e3 ♗xf1 18 ♔xf1 ♘d7 = Eliet-Kinsman, Toulouse 1996.

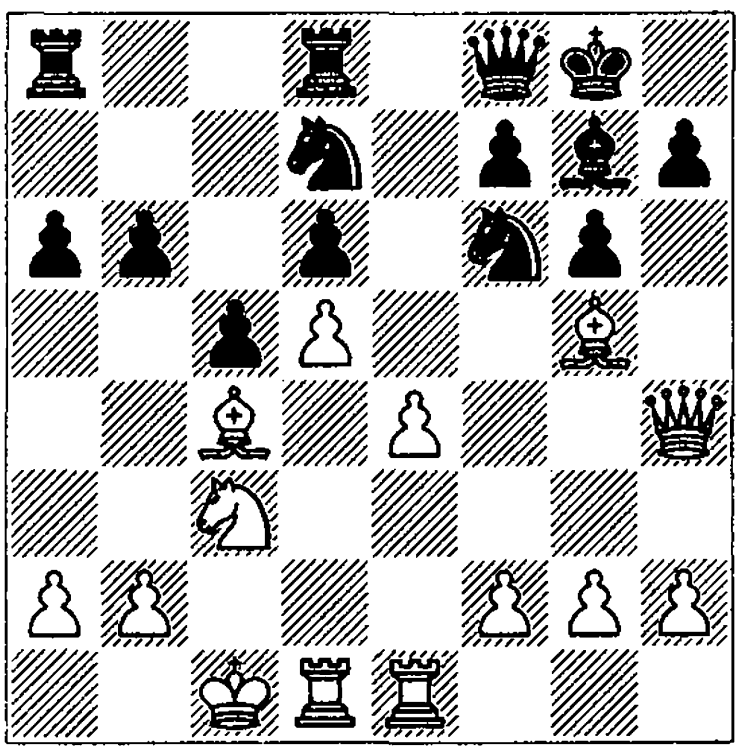
c) I suggested 12 a4 in my book, but 12...♘a6! disrupts White's play;

e.g., 13 ♘e4 (13 e3 ♘b4 14 ♖c1 ♗b7) 13...♕xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♗xd8 ♘b4 16 ♖c1 ♗a6!? (16...♘a2 17 ♖a1 ♘b4 18 ♖c1 =) 17 ♗c7 ♘xd5 18 f3 ♘xc7 19 fxe4 ♗xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♗xb2 −+.

12...♗a6 13 e4 ♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 ♕h4

15 a4 ♘bd7 16 ♖he1 b5 17 axb5 ♘e5! 18 ♗f1 axb5 gives Black a clear advantage.

15...♘bd7 16 ♖he1 ♕f8! *(D)*



W

17 ♔b1

Or:

a) 17 a4 b5! 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♗xb5 h6 20 ♗e3 ♖db8 21 ♗c6 ♖a6 with an attack and positional pressure.

b) 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♘e4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♖xe4 b5 with plenty of compensation; e.g., 21 ♗b3 c4 22 ♗c2 ♘b6 ∓.

After the text-move (17 ♔b1), 17...b5 18 ♗f1 h6! 19 ♗c1 ♘b6! 20 f4 (20 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 21 ♕xf6 ♗g7 22 ♕f3 b4 23 ♘e2 ♘c4) was Portisch-T.Horvath, Hungarian Ch 1984. Here Black could have secured a clear advantage by 20...b4! 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 g5! 23 ♕g3 bxc3 24 exf6 ♗xf6 ∓.

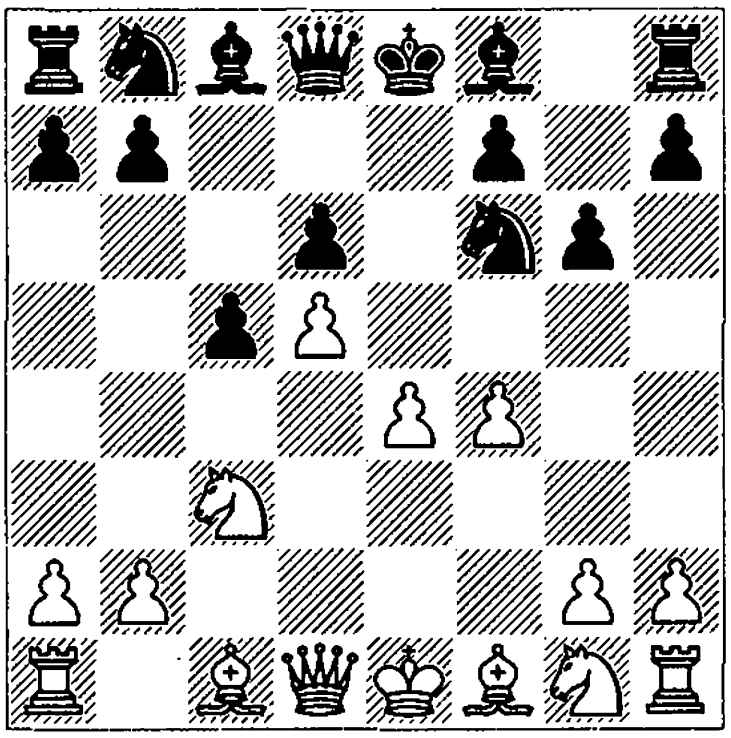
Thus both 9...♕d7 and 9...♕e7 yield equality with an abundance of opportunities to unbalance the play.

The Knight's Tour variation has never been fully worked out, but as I see it, both 7...♘bd7 and the traditional 7...♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 are fully sufficient. One way to look at it is that White has tipped his hand by playing ♘f3-d2-c4 so early. This allows Black to adjust comfortably with a set-up designed to neutralize that manoeuvre. Perhaps it's no surprise after all that White has practically abandoned this system in master play.

5 Pawn-Storm Systems

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 *(D)*

B



In this chapter, we look at a variety of pawn-storm attacks by White, all beginning from the diagram position. White typically tries to overrun Black's position with e5, but the methods vary. The most challenging of such attacks is the 'Taimanov Benoni' with 7...♗g7 8 ♗b5+. Benoni players will also meet the Four Pawns Attack (8 ♘f3), a favourite of many club and Swiss System players, and occasionally the Mikenas Attack (8 e5). I will offer repertoires against each of these systems. If one wants to take a chance and bypass all of them, I have also added a section on a practically unknown variation (7...♕e7) that is risky, but might interest the reader.

Thus, material is divided into:

A:	**7...♗g7**	72
B:	**7...♕e7**	106

A)

7...♗g7

Now there are three very distinct systems for White:

A1:	**8 e5**	72
A2:	**8 ♘f3**	75
A3:	**8 ♗b5+**	82

A1)

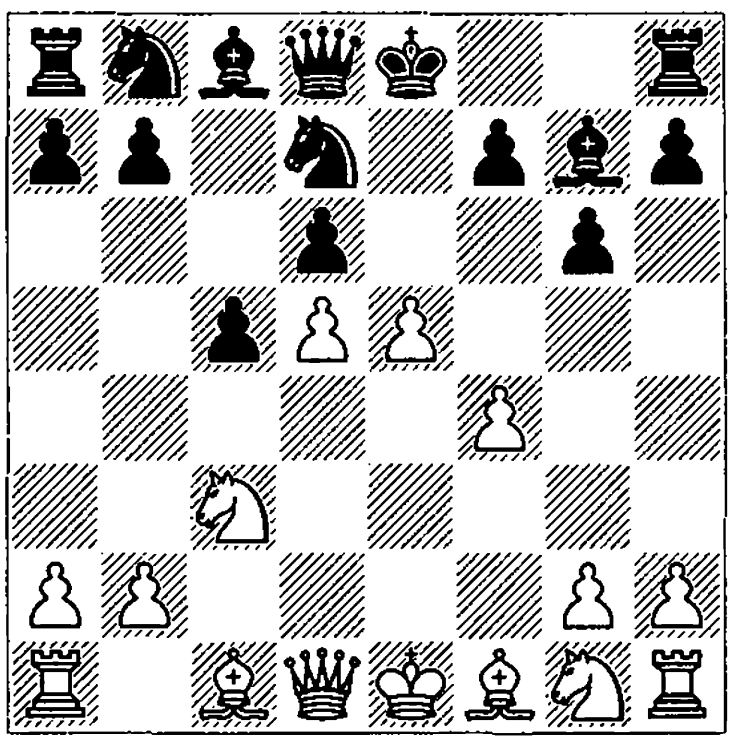
8 e5

The Mikenas Attack, rarely seen these days because White's centre becomes vulnerable.

8...♘fd7 *(D)*

Theory suggests that 8...dxe5 9 fxe5 ♘fd7 may also suffice. 8...♘fd7 is better established.

W



9 ♘b5

Or 9 ♘e4 dxe5 10 ♘d6+, transposing. Others:

a) 9 e6?! fxe6 10 dxe6 ♘b6 (the alternative 10...♗xc3+! 11 bxc3 ♘b6 may be even better; one must wonder whether White's position is worth a pawn) 11 ♘e4! (11 f5 0-0 ∓; 11 ♕b3 ♕e7 12 ♗b5+ ♘c6 and ...♗xe6) 11...0-0 (or 11...d5!? 12 ♘xc5 ♕e7 ∓) 12 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♘xd6 ♗xe6 14 ♘xb7 ♘a4! with a slight advantage for Black.

b) 9 exd6 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘f6 11 ♗e2 ♘e8 (or 11...a6 12 a4 ♕xd6 =) 12 0-0 ♘xd6 = Psakhis.

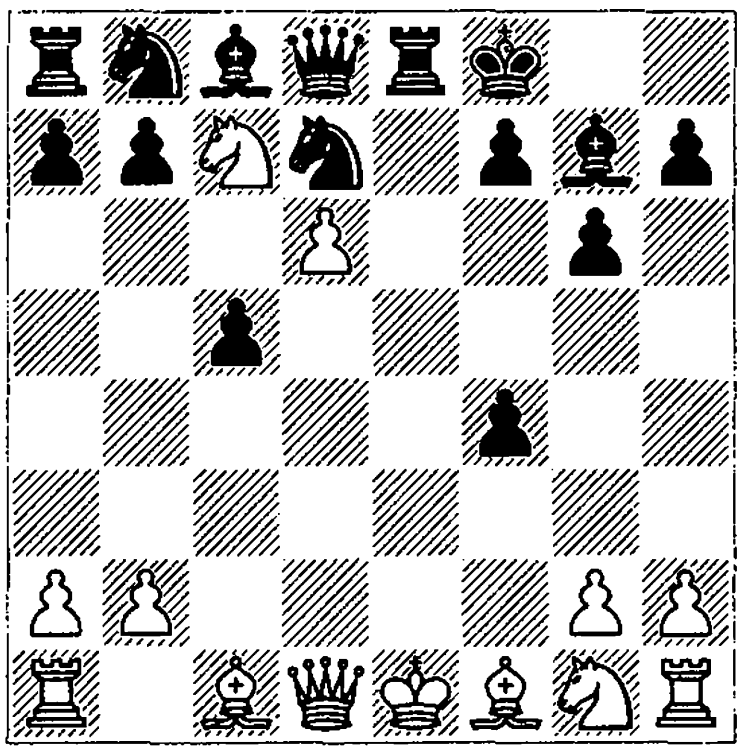
c) 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 ♗e2 dxe5 11 0-0 ♘a6 (11...e4!? 12 ♘xe4 ♘f6 13 ♘c3! ♘e8! = Vaïsser; 11...exf4 is also played) 12 ♗e3 ♖e8 13 ♕d2 (13 fxe5 ♘xe5 ∓) 13...e4! 14 ♘g5 ♘f6 ∓ Ki.Georgiev-Semkov, Varna 1982.

9...dxe5 10 ♘d6+ ♔e7 11 ♘xc8+

Or:

a) 11 fxe5?! ♘xe5 12 ♘xc8+ ♕xc8 13 d6+ ♔f8 14 ♘f3 ♕e6 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗e2 ♔g7 left Black well on top in Kavalek-Trapl, Prague 1963.

b) 11 ♘b5 (this is White's main alternative to the text-move) 11...♖e8!? (11...♘a6 has been quite successful and may even be Black's most appealing option; e.g., 12 d6+ ♔f8 13 ♘f3 ♕f6 14 fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 16 ♗xf3 ♕h4+ 17 ♔f1 ♗d7 18 ♘c3 ♖e8 ∓ Maenner-Steinert, Bern 1991) 12 d6+ ♔f8 13 ♘c7 exf4+ *(D)* and now:


W

b1) 14 ♘xe8 ♕xe8+ 15 ♗e2 ♘e5 16 ♗xf4 ♘bc6 (with a strong initiative) 17 ♘h3? ♗xh3 18 gxh3 ♘f3+ 19 ♔f2 ♕e4 20 ♗xf3 ♕xf4 21 ♔g2 ♘d4 22 ♖c1 ♘f5 0-1 Smirnov-Kapengut, Minsk 1979.

b2) 14 ♗e2 and now:

b21) Black can consider 14...♕h4+, when after 15 ♔d2?, 15...f3! looks strong; e.g., 16 ♘xf3 ♕b4+ 17 ♔c2 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 ∓ 19 d7? ♗xd7 20 ♕d6+ ♔g8 21 ♗d3 ♖f5 −+ Cullinane-Denman, British Ch (Eastbourne) 1973. 15 ♔f1 is correct, when I think that 15...♗d4 (15...♘b6!?) 16 ♕e1 ♕xe1+ 17 ♔xe1 ♘b6 is interesting; e.g., 18 ♘xe8 ♔xe8 19 ♘f3 ♘c6! or 18 ♗xf4 ♗d7! 19 ♘xa8 (19 ♗h6+ ♔g8 20 ♘xe8 ♗xe8 21 ♖b1 ♗c6!? 22 ♘f3 ♗e4 23 ♖c1 ♗xb2 24 ♖xc5 ♗a3 25 ♖e5 ♗c6 =) 19...♘xa8 20 ♔f1 ♘b6 21 ♖c1 ♘d5! 22 ♗h6+ ♔g8 23 ♘f3 ♘e3+ 24 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 25 ♖d1 ♘c6 =. White's king position is a problem in these lines, but it wouldn't be surprising if he still has a small edge.

b22) Perhaps objectively best is the older 14...♘c6, which is active and dynamically balanced. The main line goes 15 ♘xe8 (15 ♘xa8!? is mentioned by Nunn, but I haven't seen it

played or analysed) 15...♕xe8 16 ♘f3 ♘d4 17 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♗xf4 ♘e5, Taylor-Donnelly, corr. 1990, when Black has a lot of compensation (Vaïsser gives 19 ♕d2 ♗f5 20 0-0-0 ♕a4!).

In any case, the earlier possibility 11...♘a6 looks attractive, so 11 ♘b5 shouldn't overly worry Black.

11...♕xc8 12 ♘f3

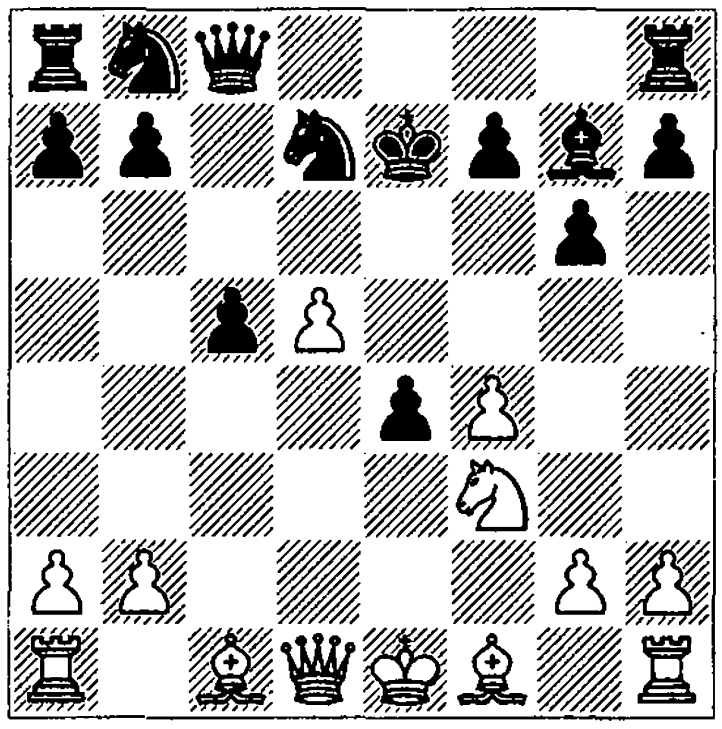
12 d6+?! ♔f8 (12...♔d8 13 ♘f3 exf4 14 ♘g5 ♘e5 favoured Black in K.Schneider-Schima, corr. 1989) 13 ♘f3 (13 ♕b3 e4!) 13...e4 14 ♘g5 h6 15 ♘xf7 (15 ♘xe4 ♕e8! 16 ♕e2 ♘c6 ∓ Partos-Holm, Skopje OL 1972) 15...♔xf7 16 ♗c4+ ♔f8 17 f5, and at this point Black has three very strong moves: 17...g5, 17...♗d4! 18 fxg6 ♘e5 (intending to answer 19 ♖f1+ with 19...♔g7), and 17...♘c6 18 fxg6 ♘de5!. Schneider continues 19 0-0+ ♔e8 20 ♗f7+ ♔d8 21 ♕d5, and apart from his 21...♕g4, 21...♕d7 22 ♗e6 ♕e8 ∓ is simple enough.

12...e4!? *(D)*

Povah's move, still not well investigated and therefore with considerable surprise value. On the positive side, ...e4 frees the monster on g7 and gains a tempo. Just as importantly, it temporarily keeps both the e- and f-files closed, affording some much-needed protection to Black's king. On the negative side, Black fails to develop, and he can no longer get his rook to e8 in view of 12...e4 13 ♘g5 ♖e8?? 14 d6+ ♔f8 15 ♕d5.

12...e4 might be the best method of playing for an advantage, because 12...♖e8 'only' equalizes in some lines. On the other hand, 12...♖e8 has been heavily analysed and proven in practice; the interested reader should consult *ECO* or Vaïsser.

W



13 ♘g5

Or:

a) 13 d6+ ♔f8 14 ♘g5 at best transposes after 14...♘b6.

b) 13 ♘e5 ♘xe5 14 d6+ ♔f8 15 fxe5, and now 15...♕e6!, among others.

13...♘b6! 14 d6+

Nunn analyses these alternatives:

a) 14 ♗e2 ♗d4!.

b) 14 ♕b3 ♕f5 15 d6+ ♔f8 16 ♗c4 (16 g3 is well met by 16...♘c6 17 ♗h3 ♕d5; Nunn gives 16 g4 ♕d7, when 17 ♗e3 ♗d4 18 ♗b5 ♘c6 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♗xd4 cxd4 21 ♕b4 ♘d5! 22 ♕xd4 f6 is surprisingly good for Black) 16...h6 17 ♘xf7 ♘xc4 18 ♕xb7 ♕xf7 19 ♕xa8 ♕e8 20 ♕xa7 ♗d4 "with a strong initiative" – Nunn.

c) 14 ♘xe4 ♖d8 gives Black good play. A silly example continued 15 ♗e3 ♔f8! 16 ♗xc5+ ♔g8 ∓ 17 d6?? ♖e8 –+ Crippa-Pontecorvo, corr. 1987.

14...♔f8 15 a4

Or 15 ♗c4 ♘xc4 16 ♕d5 ♘xd6 17 ♕xd6+ ♔g8 18 0-0 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕f5! ∓ Kerr-Povah, London 1976.

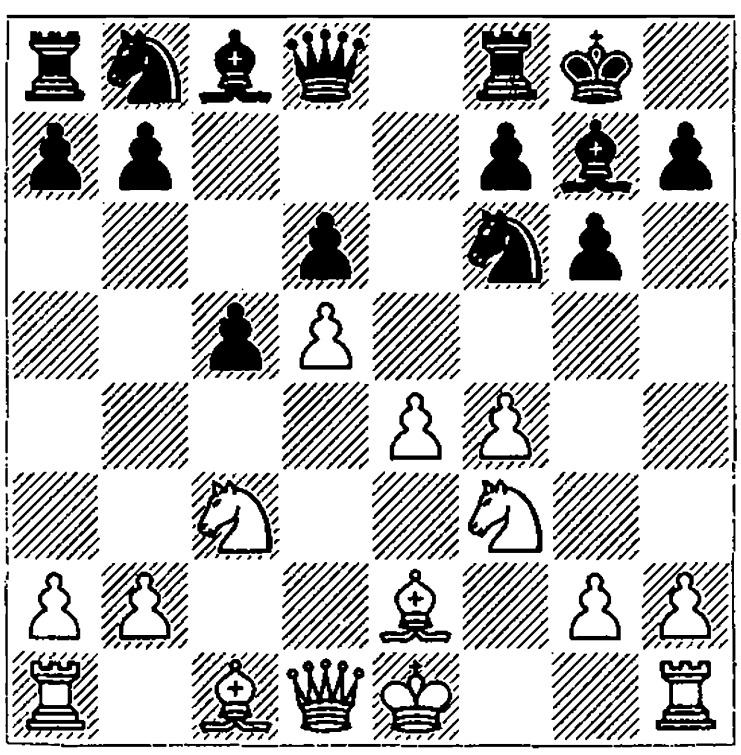
After the text-move (15 a4), Kooiman-Povah, London 1976 continued 15...h6 16 a5 hxg5 17 axb6 a6 18 ♕d5 and now 18...♕c6 with a complex position; instead, 18...♕d7! followed by ...♘c6 must favour Black; for example, 19 fxg5 ♘c6 20 ♗b5 ♗d4 intending ...♔g7 or ...♕g4.

A2)

8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 *(D)*

I have played the extremely irregular 9 ♗d3 a few times for its surprise value, but there are several good answers, the easiest being 9...♗g4 followed by ...♘bd7 and restraint of the e-pawn; for example, 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 a6 13 a4 ♖b8 (or 13...♕a5) 14 a5 ♘e8, as in our main line below, intending ...♘c7 and ...b5. 9...♕b6!? is also fascinating and almost unexplored. The main point is that the natural 10 ♘d2 ♘g4 11 ♘c4 ♕d8! is remarkably difficult to counter.

B



9 ♗e2 introduces the main line of the Four Pawns Attack. Since this mostly arises via a King's Indian Defence, I will follow a policy of suggesting two interesting variations, but ones which don't require quite the detail that I supply for true Benoni systems:

A21: 9...♗g4 76
A22: 9...♘bd7 79

I think that the second option is extremely underrated, and hope that you at least consider playing it.

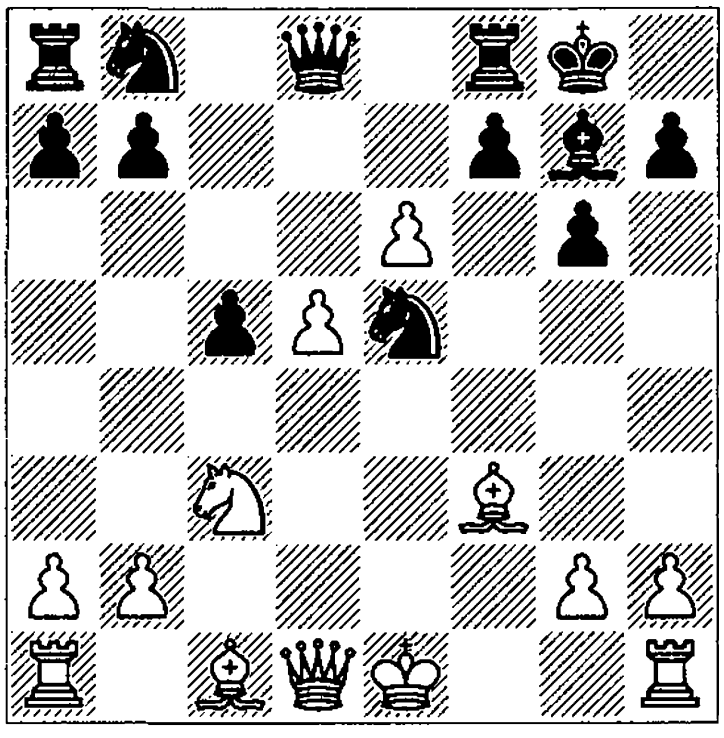
For the record, after years of looking at it, I'm also convinced that 9...♖e8 is absolutely sound, and even slightly advantageous in some of the best-known main lines. However, its complete analysis would require too much of this book, so for those interested, I refer you to the books in the Bibliography by Vaïsser and Schneider.

In addition to Line A22, another knight move that is interesting and perhaps underestimated is 9...♘a6!?:

a) There are few good examples, but White's theoretical answer used to be 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗g5 ♕b6 13 ♘a4 ♕b4+ 14 ♗d2 ♕e4 15 ♘c3 ♕f5 is hard to assess, but looks OK for Black) 12...♖e8 13 e6 fxe6 14 d6, and now instead of the previously played 14...♗d7, 14...♕b6! is a clear improvement: 15 ♕b3 (15 ♕d2 is met by 15...e5!, when 16 ♗c4+? ♗e6 17 d7 exf4 gives Black a winning position, while 16 ♗b5 ♖e6! still favours Black) 15...♕xb3 16 axb3 ♘b4 and Black has a distinct advantage, Urbanek-Pfeifer, corr. 1999.

b) So perhaps White should be content with 10 0-0 ♘c7; e.g., 11 e5!? (11 a4 ♖e8 =; 11 ♖e1 ♘d7 =, when 12 ♗e3 ♖e8 threatens ...♗xc3 and makes defence of e4 awkward in view of 13 ♕d3 b6 or 13 ♘d2? ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♘xd5) 11...dxe5 12 d6 ♘e6 13 fxe5 ♘d7 =.

9...♘a6 definitely deserves more tests.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A21)

9...♗g4

This is a popular simplifying idea that reduces the threat of e5 by trying to eliminate the f3-knight. If White plays ♘d2 and allows ...♗xe2, it will be equally difficult to advance in the centre. I will recommend this system with an irregular twist on move 11.

10 0-0

With 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 12 0-0, we transpose to note 'd' to White's 11th move.

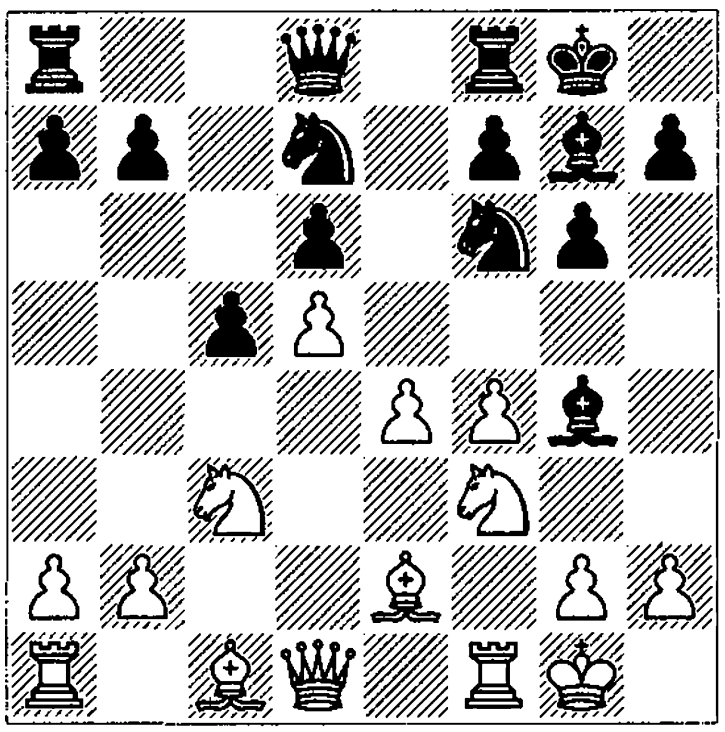
I hate to pass by 10 e5 lightly, since it has a small, dedicated following, but it has always been OK for Black. A sample from the main line: 10...♗.xf3 11 ♗xf3 dxe5 12 fxe5 ♘fd7 13 e6 ♘e5 *(D)* and now:

a) 14 exf7+ ♖xf7 15 0-0 ♘bd7 = (or 15...♘xf3+); for example, 16 ♗e2 ♖xf1+ 17 ♕xf1 ♕b6 = Reinemer-Kuzmin, Oberwart 1995.

b) 14 0-0 fxe6 15 ♗e3! (15 ♗e4 ♖xf1+ 16 ♕xf1 ♔h8!? 17 dxe6 can be answered by 17...♕d4+ 18 ♔h1 ♘g4 = or 17...♘bc6 – Vaïsser) 15...♘xf3+ (15...♘a6!? is also OK) 16 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 17 ♕xf3 exd5 18 ♘xd5 ♘d7 (more straightforward is 18...♘c6! 19 ♗xc5 ♔h8 20 ♖d1 ♕a5 ∓ Vaïsser) 19 ♖f1 (19 ♕h3 ♘f8 20 ♖d1 ♗d4!? ∓; 19 ♖d1! ♘e5 20 ♕e4 ♕d6! ∓) 19...♘e5 20 ♕e4 ♕d6 21 ♗g5 ♘c6 (Kapengut suggests 21...♖e8) 22 ♘f6+ (22 ♗f6 ♖f8) 22...♔h8 23 ♔h1 ♕d4, Schoen-A.V.Ivanov, Biel 1990. Kapengut assesses this as equal, but I see no real compensation.

10...♘bd7 *(D)*

There is some point in 10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3; for example, 11...♘fd7!? is interesting in that case. But 10...♘bd7 is more logical, saving a tempo if White plays h3.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11 ♖e1

Probably the most demanding move. Other moves have been popular in the past (especially 11 h3), but they seem to have fallen out of favour:

a) 11 ♕c2 ♘e8 12 ♗d2 a6 13 a4 ♖c8 = 14 ♗c4!? ♗d4+ 15 ♔h1 ♘ef6!? 16 ♖ae1 ♖e8 17 ♘g1 ♘h5 = Akopyan-Rey, San Francisco 2000. The position is in a kind of dynamic balance.

b) 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♖e8 13 ♕f3 (13 ♘c4 ♘b6) 13...♕b6!? (an original idea; 13...♖c8 14 ♔h1 c4 15 g4 h6! = is the conventional line, while Blokh proposes the simple 13...♕e7 14 ♖e1 ♘b6! 15 ♖e2 c4) 14 ♘c4 ♕a6! 15 ♘a3 (versus ...b5) 15...c4 16 ♗e3 ♘xe4! 17 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 18 ♘c2 ♗xa1 19 ♖xa1 f5 20 ♘g5 ♕a4 is analysis by Schneider, who assesses this as a little better for Black. A nice solution.

c) 11 a4 and now:

c1) 11...♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 c4!? 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 15 ♗d4 ♖e7! 16 ♔h1 (16 ♔h2 ♘c5!? 17 e5 ♘e8 =) 16...a6 17 g4 ♖ae8 18 g5 ♘xe4! with good compensation for the exchange, Peev-Velimirović, Sofia 1972.

c2) 11...♖c8! (more reliable) 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 c4 14 ♗e3 ♘c5 15 e5 dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘fd7 17 e6 ♘e5! is given by both Nunn and Litmanović. Kapengut then continues 18 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♘e4 ♘xf3+ 20 ♕xf3 fxe6 21 ♕g4 ♖xf1+ 22 ♖xf1 ♖xd5 23 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 24 ♖f7 ♕b6+ ∓.

d) 11 h3 ("the most frequently played continuation", according to Kapengut) 11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♖b8 (this move goes unmentioned by Kapengut, but I like it here, still waiting to decide upon ...♖e8 or ...♘e8; 12...♘e8 is also OK, often transposing to note 'c' to White's 12th move) 13 ♖e1 ♘e8 (as in the main line, Black prepares ...♘c7 and ...b5) and now:

d1) 14 ♗g4 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♗e2 a6 17 ♗d3 (17 a4 ♘c7 18 a5 ♗d4+ and ...♕f6 – Vaïsser) 17...♘c7 18 ♕c2 ♕f6 19 ♘e2 (versus ...c4), Monin-Schekachev, St Petersburg 1994. Here 19...♖be8 appears natural, but 19...♘xd5 is more ambitious. Then after 20 ♘g3 Vaïsser gives 20...♘c7, but it's not clear how he would answer 21 ♗xf5. On the other hand, 20...♕h4! pins the knight and puts pressure on the kingside; for example, 21 ♔h2 ♘b4 (21...♘7f6 22 ♗xf5 ♔h8!?) 22 ♕b3+ ♔h8 23 ♗d2 ♘xd3 24 ♕xd3 ♘f6! hoping for 25 ♘xf5? (25 ♕xf5 h5!; 25 ♗c3! d5! and Black seems slightly better) 25...♘g4+ 26 ♔g1 ♖xf5!, etc.

d2) 14 a4 a6 (Vaïsser's 14...♘c7 is more flexible) 15 a5 ♘c7 16 ♕d3 ♖e8 17 ♗e3 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 ♖e2 ♕b8! 20 ♖a2 ♖b3 = Cebalo-Kristić, Pula 1999.

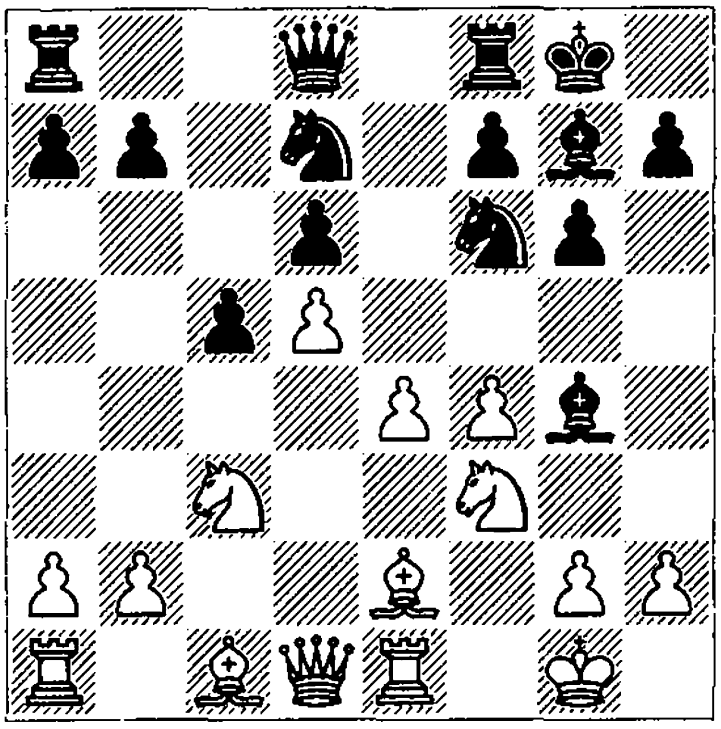
We now return to 11 ♖e1 *(D)*:

11...♘e8

This rather irregular idea (11...♖e8 is more common) has done well in practice. Black's idea is to cover e5 with his g7-bishop while preparing queenside expansion via ...a6, ...♘c7 and ...b5.

Nevertheless, it would be nice to temporize, waiting for h3, when White loses a tempo. One attempt to do this, 11...a6?, fails to 12 e5! ♘e8 13 e6 fxe6 14 ♘g5.

B



But I wonder about 11...♕b8!?, to discourage e5 and prepare ...b5. Then, for example, 12 a4 (12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘e8) 12...a6 13 a5 (13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘e8) 13...♘e8 could follow, with a good version of the text, or perhaps 13...♕c7 and ...♖fb8, now that e5 has lost its force.

This is just analysis, but I think that 11...♕b8 may be a very efficient solution to Black's problems. Compare what follows.

12 ♘g5 *(D)*

Probably the most promising move. Here are the alternatives:

a) 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 a6 14 a4 ♗d4+ 15 ♔h1 ♘ef6 16 ♕f3 (16 ♘c4 ♘b6 =) 16...♖e8 17 ♘e2 ♕e7 18 ♘xd4 cxd4 19 b3 ♘xd5 20 ♗a3? (20 ♗b2 ♘b4! ∓) 20...♘e3 21 ♖ec1 and now 21...♘c5! is even better than 21...♕e6, as played in Banikas-Beliavsky, Tyniste 1995.

b) 12 ♗e3 a6 13 a4 (or 12 a4 a6 13 ♗e3) 13...♖b8 (13...♘c7 14 ♗f2!? ♖b8 15 ♗h4 ♗f6 16 ♗g3 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3, Vaïsser-Smirin, Moscow rpd 1996, and now 17...♗d4+! 18 ♔h1 ♖e8 with counterplay – Vaïsser) 14 a5 ♘c7 15 ♘d2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 b5 17 axb6 ♘xb6 18 ♕d3, Flear-Mortensen, Reykjavik ECC 1999, 18...f5!? (18...♖e8 =) 19 e5 ♖e8 20 ♘c4 ♘xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♖xb2 22 exd6 ♘b5 with a slight advantage for Black – Mortensen.

c) 12 h3 (the most common move) 12...♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘c7 (13...♖b8 is note 'd' to White's 10th move) 14 a4 (14 ♗e3 ♖b8 15 ♗g4 f5 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♗f3 b5! 18 ♕c2 ♘b6! =) 14...a6 15 g4 ♖b8 16 g5 (this expansion is typically rather slow) 16...b5 (or 16...f5) 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗g4 b4 19 ♘e2 ♘b5 20 ♕c2 ♖e8 = Kniest-Glek, Berlin 1997.

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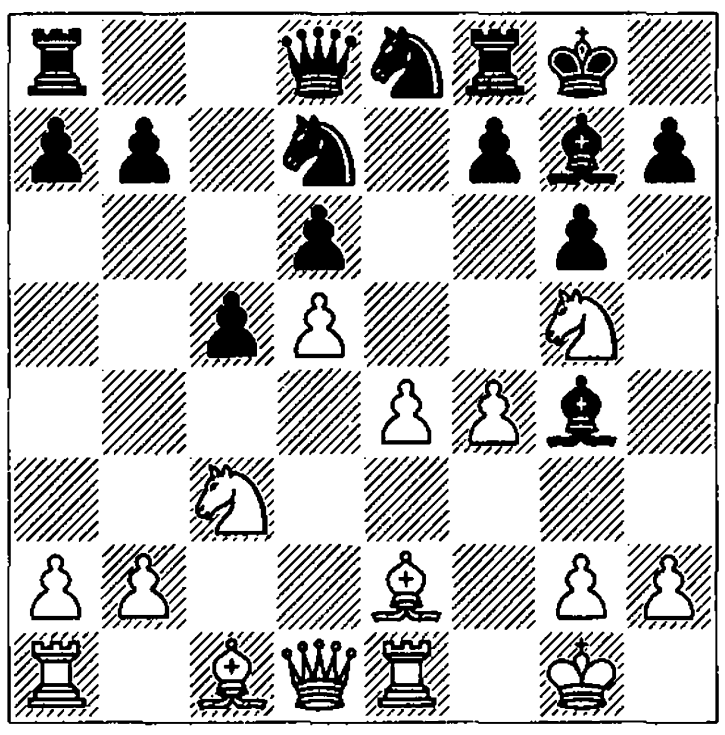


12...♗xe2 13 ♖xe2!

Considered best, thinking about ♕e1, and perhaps ♗e3-f2. 13 ♕xe2 is at best harmless; e.g., 13...a6 14 a4 ♗d4+! 15 ♔h1 ♘ef6 ∓ Elbilia-Renet, Manila OL 1992, in view of 16 ♘f3 ♖e8 17 ♕d3 ♘g4 18 ♘d1 ♖c8! 19 ♘xd4 cxd4 (Hébert) and Black has all the squares.

13...a6

The immediate 13...♘c7 is also playable. Then, in line with the plan in the last note, 14 ♕e1 ♖e8 15 ♗e3? (15 ♗d2 =) allows 15...h6 16 ♘f3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♖xe4, when White lacks compensation.

14 a4 ♘c7 15 ♕d3

To stop ...b5. An alternative is 15 ♕e1 ♖e8 16 ♗d2 b5 17 axb5 axb5 with equality.

15...♘f6!?

15...♖b8 16 a5 b5 17 axb6 ♖xb6 "also looks OK for Black" – Mortensen. Hébert even likes 15...b5! 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 with the idea that 18 ♘xb5 is met by 18...♕a6.

16 b3 b5 17 ♗b2 bxa4

Often the best way to open lines against the b3 and a4 structure.

18 ♘xa4 ♖b8 =

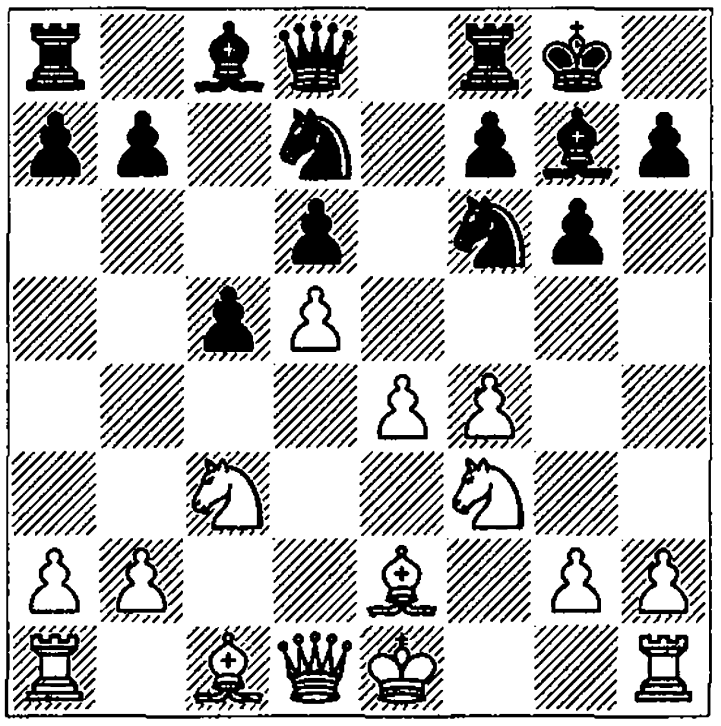
Chabanon-Degraeve, French Ch (Méribel) 1998 continued 19 ♘f3 ♖e8 20 g3 ♕d7! 21 ♖d1?! (21 ♘d2) 21...♕b5 22 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 23 e5 ♘xd5 (23...♕xb3!?) 24 ♕xd5 ♕xe2 25 exf6 ♕e3+ 26 ♔g2 ♖e6 27 ♖d2 ♖xf6 ∓. White's pieces are coordinating poorly.

Black's 11...♘e8 idea has its pluses and minuses, but it should hold the balance and it avoids the complex theory associated with the main lines of 9...♗g4. One might want to look into 11...♕b8 as well, since it defers the ...♘e8 decision while forcing White to show his hand.

A22)

9...♘bd7 *(D)*

A move enthusiastically endorsed by Schneider, who gives it '!'. I like it as well.



10 e5

The only move that Schneider considers, and certainly the most exciting, but it may be that the direct 10 0-0 is actually better. Then after 10...♖e8, White has a number of ways to react to the threat on e4:

a) 11 ♗d3 doesn't make much sense: 11...c4!? (11...b5!; 11...a6 12 a4 ♕c7 =) 12 ♗c2 b5 13 ♖e1 a6 with an equal position, Sznajder-Widera, Pyskovice 1991.

b) 11 e5?! dxe5 12 fxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♗f4 ♖e8 (or 14...♖f5! 15 g4 ♖xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 with an obvious advantage for Black, Balogh-Szalanczy, Budapest 1991) 15 ♗f3 ♗f5 16 d6 ♕d7 ∓ Ishbulatov-Toth, Budapest 1998.

c) 11 ♕c2 is recommended by Vaïsser, but I think that Black is holding his own after 11...♕e7! (11...a6 12 a4 ♕e7!?) 12 ♖e1! (12 ♘d2 ♘b6!; for example, 13 a4 ♘fxd5! 14 exd5 ♗f5! 15 ♕b3 ♗xc3 and ...♕xe2; 12 ♘b5 ♘xd5! 13 exd5 ♕xe2 ∓) 12...♘b6! 13 a4 (13 h3 ♗d7) 13...♗g4 =, with the idea 14 a5 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘bd7.

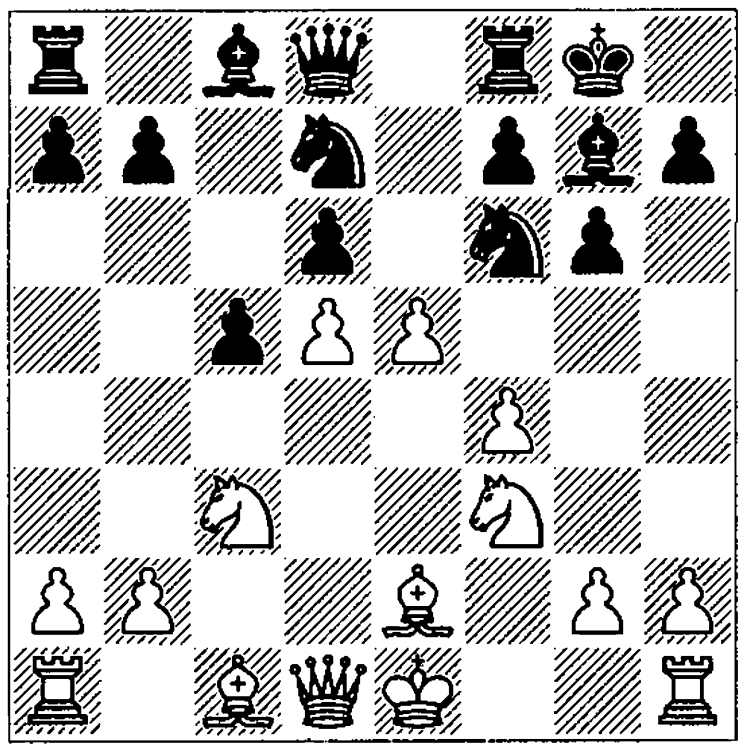
d) 11 ♘d2 a6 12 a4 (12 ♘c4 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♘xd6 ♖d4) transposes into a variation that is well known from the 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 move-order. Now 12...c4 has been analysed to death, but I like the less forcing option 12...♖b8. Then:

d1) 13 ♕c2 ♘b6 (13...h5 is also good) 14 h3? (14 a5 ♘a8 is equal) 14...♘fxd5 15 exd5 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♖xe2 ∓ Dura-Martić, corr. 1987.

d2) 13 ♕b3 is met by the familiar 13...b5! 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 (15 ♗xb5 ♘g4!) 15...♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 ∓ Schneider.

d3) 13 ♔h1 (this move is the reason that 12...♖b8 has met with disapproval in the books) 13...♘b6! (a nice improvement on the previous unsuccessful moves 13...b6, 13...♕c7, and 13...c4) 14 ♖e1 (14 a5 ♘a8, as always, has the twin ideas of ...b5 and ...♘c7-b5) 14...♗d7 (14...h5!?) 15 a5 ♘a8 16 ♗f3 h5! (with the idea ...♘g4) 17 h3?! ♘g4! 18 ♕e2 ♕h4 19 ♖f1 ♗d4 20 ♗xg4 hxg4 21 ♕e1 ♕xe1 (21...♕h5! is very strong) 22 ♖xe1 b5 23 axb6 ♘xb6 24 ♖xa6 ♔g7!? 25 ♘b3 ♗c8 26 ♖a7 ♗xc3 27 bxc3 ♘xd5 28 ♘a5 ♘xc3! 29 ♘c6 ♘xe4 –+ Apresa-Grau Ribas, corr. 1994-2000.

We now return to 10 e5 *(D)*: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10...dxe5

Although not leading to such flashy play, 10...♘e8! is a very attractive move, and depending upon the assessment of 13...fxe6 in the main line below, it may be objectively Black's best continuation. White has to defend his overextended pawns, and may even have trouble fully equalizing:

a) 11 e6?! (given an '!' by Schneider, and the only move which has been seen here, but it may well be a mistake) 11...fxe6 12 dxe6 (12 ♘g5 ♘b6 13 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 14 dxe6, Kilpi-Lahti, Jyväskylä 1997, and now 14...♘c7 15 ♗g4 ♖e8 is probably the easiest path to an advantage) 12...♘b6 13 a4 ♗xe6 14 a5 ♘c8 15 ♘g5 ♘c7 16 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 17 ♕d5 ♖e8!? (17...♕h4+! 18 g3 ♕e7 19 ♗c4 ♔h8! is a very strong alternative) 18 0-0 ♔h8 ∓ Kluss-K.Kaufmann, Lublin 1993. Schneider suggests 19 ♕xb7 ♘e7 20 ♗c4, but 20...d5! refutes this, as both 21 ♘xd5 ♖b8 and 21 ♗xd5 ♖b8 22 ♕xb8 ♕xb8 23 ♗xe6 ♘f5 are pretty awful for White.

b) 11 exd6 is quite easy to meet: 11...♘xd6 12 0-0 ♖e8 ∓ with moves like ...♘b6 and ...♗f5 or ...♘f5 in the air.

c) 11 ♗e3!? looks better: 11...♕e7 12 ♕d2! dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘xe5 14 0-0-0!? intending to meet 14...♘g4 with 15 ♗g5. This is very messy; my feeling is that White has slightly less than full compensation for the pawn.

11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 e6!

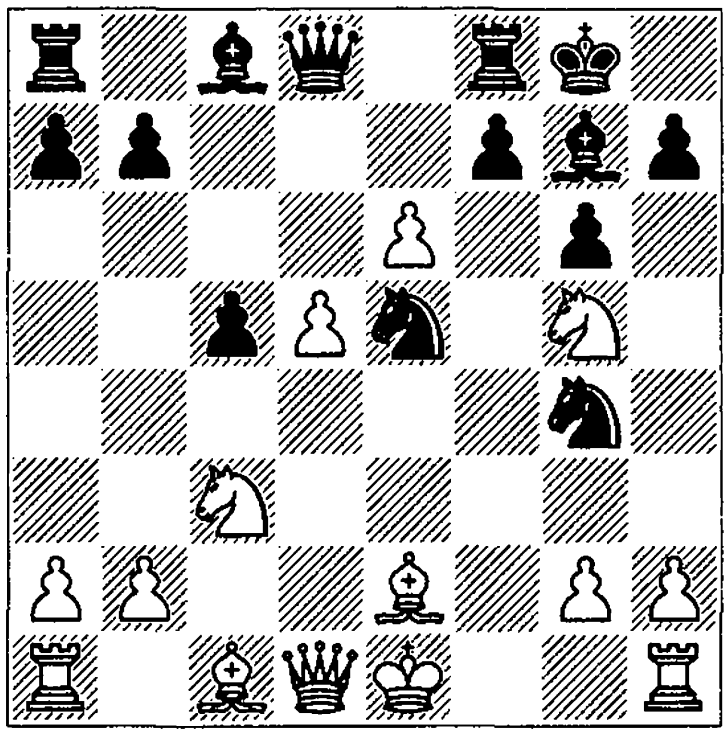
Vaïsser suggests 12 ♗g5, which I think should be answered by 12...♕b6 13 ♘a4 (13 e6 ♕xb2 14 0-0 ♕xc3 15 exd7 ♗xd7 –+; 13 0-0 ♘dxe5 is better for Black than the similar 9...♖e8 lines, because f7 is covered) 13...♕a5+ 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 ∓ (the centre is falling).

12...♘de5!

Ambitious, and Schneider's main move, even though his continuation is rather dubious. The alternative 12...fxe6 13 dxe6 ♘de5 14 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 is passive, but not so bad. Accurate play yields White a very small edge, but all the games from this position have been drawn thus far. Of course, Black would like to play for more.

13 ♘g5 *(D)*

B



Certainly the critical continuation, as shown by the following lines:

a) 13 exf7+ ♖xf7 14 0-0? (14 ♘g5 ♖f5 15 ♘ce4 is assessed as 'unclear' by Stohl; in that case, 15...h6 16 ♘e6 ♗xe6 17 dxe6 ♕xd1+ is at least equal) 14...♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♗d4+ 16 ♔h1 ♘xh2 17 ♘e4 ♘xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♕h4+ 0-1 Kalousek-A.Toth, Budapest 1998.

b) 13 ♗f4? fxe6 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 0-0 exd5 16 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗g4! ∓ Kahn-A.Schneider, Budapest 1992.

c) 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 exf7+ ♖xf7 15 ♗e3 ♘c4! (Schneider's suggestion, to improve upon his own 15...♕h4+ 16 g3 ♕e7 17 ♔d2 ∓ Szabolcsi-A.Schneider, Budapest 1993) 16 ♗xc5 (16 ♗xc4 ♕h4+ ∓) 16...♘xb2 17 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 18 ♕xc3 ♕xd5 19 ♗d4 ♗g4!! 20 ♗xg4 ♖e8+ 21 ♔d2 ♕xg2+ –+ (all analysis by Schneider).

13...c4!!?

A beautiful and compelling move originally played by I.Zaitsev. Schneider assigns it a '!!', not unjustly, but in the end I question its ultimate value. If a pessimistic assessment of 13...c4 is right, the best move here may actually be the promising sacrifice 13...fxe6!? 14 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 15 ♕xg4 exd5 with two pawns for a piece. This has only been played a few times, and is hard to assess on that basis alone. However, I tend to favour Black because White's king ends up in the centre fighting the bishop-pair and he hasn't any obvious counterplay. 16 ♕h4 (16 ♕g3 ♖e8+ 17 ♔d1 ♗f5 intending ...♕d7 and a devastating advance of pawns in the centre) 16...h6 17 ♘f3 g5 and now:

a) 18 ♗xg5 hxg5 19 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 20 ♘xg5 ♗g4 is fine for Black.

b) 18 ♕g3 d4 19 ♘b1?! ♕e8+ 20 ♔d1?, as in Pliasunov-Khismatullin, Russian U-16 Ch (St Petersburg) 1998, loses to 20...d3! 21 ♖e1 ♕a4+.

c) 18 ♕h5!? is untested, but equally depressing for White after something like 18...d4 19 ♘e2 ♕e7.

d) 18 ♕a4 g4!? 19 ♘d2 ♗d7 20 ♕b3 c4! 21 ♕xb7 ♕e7+ 22 ♘e2 ♖ae8 23 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 24 ♕xc4 ♖f4! and Black is winning, Kopionkin-Ulko, Smolensk 2000.

I suspect that 13...fxe6 is objectively good for Black. At any rate, White's practical chances of defending successfully are not good at all.

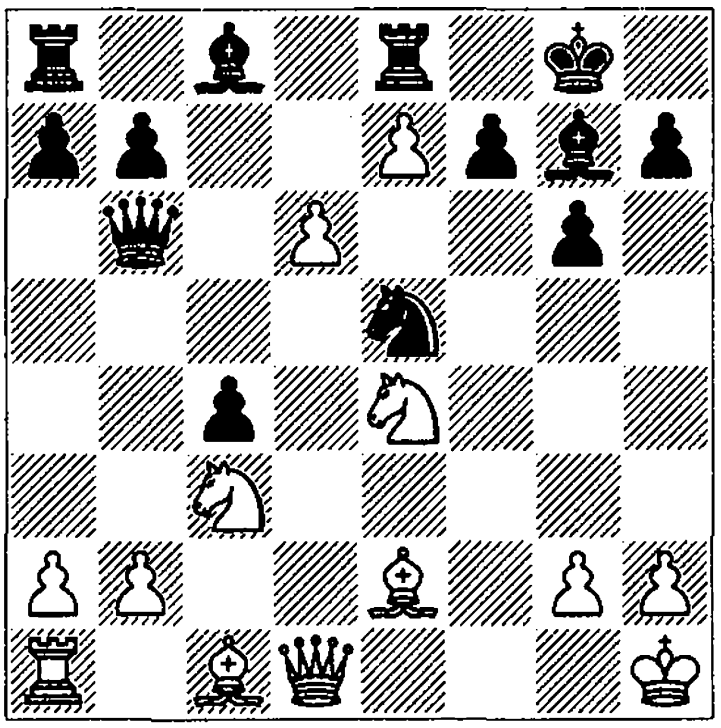
14 0-0!

Or:

a) 14 ♗xg4 ♘d3+ 15 ♔e2 fxe6 16 ♗f3 exd5 17 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 18 ♖f1 ♗g4+ 19 ♗f3 ♗xc3! 20 ♗xg4 ♕d4! with a winning attack (I.Zaitsev).

b) 14 ♘xf7 ♘xf7! (14...♕b6 15 ♘e4 ♘xf7 and now 16 exf7+? loses to 16...♖xf7 17 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 18 ♕xg4 ♖e8, whereas 16 ♗xg4 ♘d6! is better for Black, but not clearly so) 15 ♗xg4 (15 exf7+ ♖xf7 16 ♗xg4? ♕h4+ 17 g3 ♕xg4 ∓) 15...♗xc3+! 16 bxc3 ♘e5 17 ♗e2 (there is no good move; for example, 17 ♗f3 ♘xf3+ 18 gxf3 ♖f5!) 17...♕h4+ 18 g3 ♕e4 19 ♖f1 ♗xe6! with a decisive advantage for Black.

14...♕b6+ 15 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 16 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 17 ♘ge4 ♕b6 18 e7 ♖e8 19 d6 *(D)*


B

19...♘d3!?

This is Schneider's attempted improvement upon 19...♕c6 20 ♘d5 ♔h8, Knežević-I.Zaitsev, Smederevska Palanka 1971, when 21 ♘c7! should be very good for White, although this is not initially obvious.

In my opinion, Black's best chance to save Zaitsev's 13...c4 is probably 19...♗e6. Then 20 ♘d5 ♗xd5 21 ♕xd5 is still extremely difficult to answer; the best try for Black may be 21...♕b4 22 ♗d2 ♕xb2, although I still can't find a good solution to 23 ♖f1 with multiple ideas such as ♘g5, ♗g4, ♗c3 and d7.

20 ♗xd3 cxd3 21 ♕xd3 ♗f5 22 ♘d5! ♕xd6!?

Thus far Schneider's analysis. He continues 23 ♘df6+ ♕xf6 24 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 25 ♕b3 ♖xe7 26 ♗d2 ♖ae8 ∓, which is fair, but sadly, 23 ♘xd6 ♗xd3 24 ♗f4! intending ♘c7 is clearly better for White, since Black cannot deal with the e-pawn.

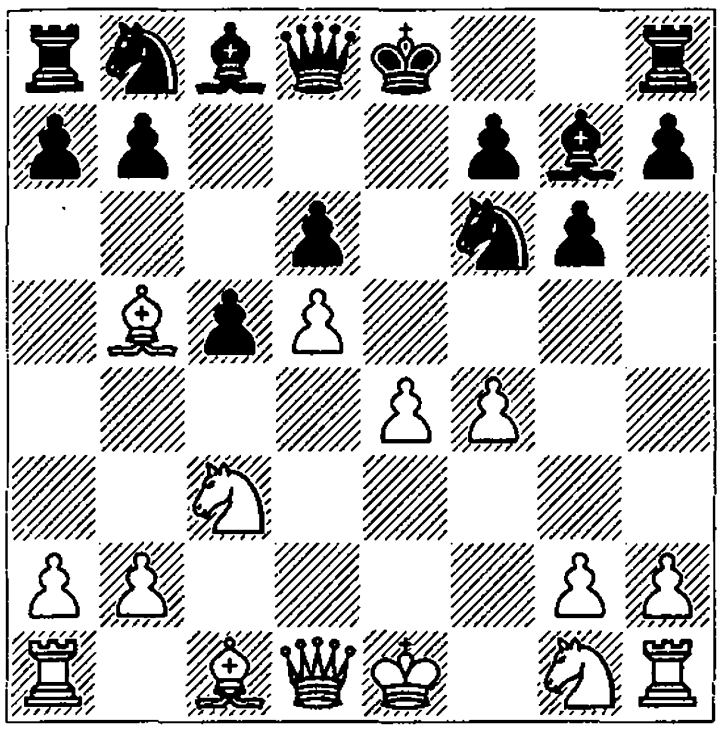
The fate of the *mêlée* introduced by 11...♘g4 appears to rest mainly with 13...fxe6. However that turns out, it seems to me that Black's option of 10...♘e8 means that he stands well enough after 10 e5. Since Black's play after 10 0-0 also looks satisfactory, it's strange that 9...♘bd7 has been neglected for so long.

A3)

8 ♗b5+ *(D)*

This is the Taimanov Attack, a greatly feared weapon that (along with some other lines, such as the ♗d3 and

B



♘ge2 line of Chapter 7) has driven numerous Benoni players away from the 'pure' 2...c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 move-order. Many, if not most, Benoni advocates now wait for White to commit to ♘f3, as in the sequence 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5, etc. If White plays 3 ♘c3 with this move-order, Black can choose to play the Nimzo-Indian (3...♗b4) or the Queen's Gambit Declined (3...d5). These days, a lot of people don't even like the Benoni with ♘f3 in, due to the Modern Main Line (Chapter 9). However, I think that I have provided good ways to meet that system, and I will try to do the same here.

This is a particularly difficult task, given the space required to examine two systems in detail. Therefore, I have split up the work into two parts. One is the presentation in this section, which itself is a double repertoire due to the option of ...♕d8 or ...♕e7 ideas. The other is an 'avoidance' move-order, trying to bypass the problem before it arises. The latter is risky and completely experimental, in contrast to the main repertoire lines, which follow immediately below.

I wrote a book about the Taimanov Attack in 1985 that reflected my great optimism about it. I have also played it myself, with good results. Established theory remains favourable to White, although *ECO* rather surprisingly gives equality in one commonly played line involving ...♘a6-c7. I'm a little sceptical of that and in fact, my old book is still relevant in calling that line into question. What I propose here is to play a different set of lines involving ...♕h4+. This idea achieved some popularity after I wrote my book, and I feel that it is underrated. Black takes a practical approach to the position, and the strategies tend to be well-defined. At worst, the ...♕h4+ lines should limit White's advantage to about what he achieves in most openings. I will try to show that they do more than that.

Before continuing, I should note two things that apply to this section. Perhaps more than any other variation, the Taimanov Attack will test Black's defensive and counterattacking skills. These positions are more resilient than they might at first appear, and one has to keep in mind the hypermodern principle that White's advanced central pawns are not only menacing but also weaknesses. Secondly, many of the positions that arise in this section are unbelievably complicated. One can pursue a complex line in detail for ten moves only to reach a position that is quite as chaotic as the one you started with. I have done a mass of speculative analysis here, to the best of my ability,

but the reader should be aware that some of it will unquestionably be subject to improvement. My advice would be to study and reflect upon the material rather than to try to commit a great deal of it to memory.

8...♘fd7

In the end, despite enormous complications, I think that 8...♘bd7 is just unsound, and 8...♗d7 yields White a clear advantage. After the correct move 8...♘fd7, let's see how White can play it:

A31: 9 ♘f3 84
A32: 9 ♗e2 86
A33: 9 ♗d3 87
A34: 9 a4 92

The last move is the one that has discouraged so many Benoni players.

A31)

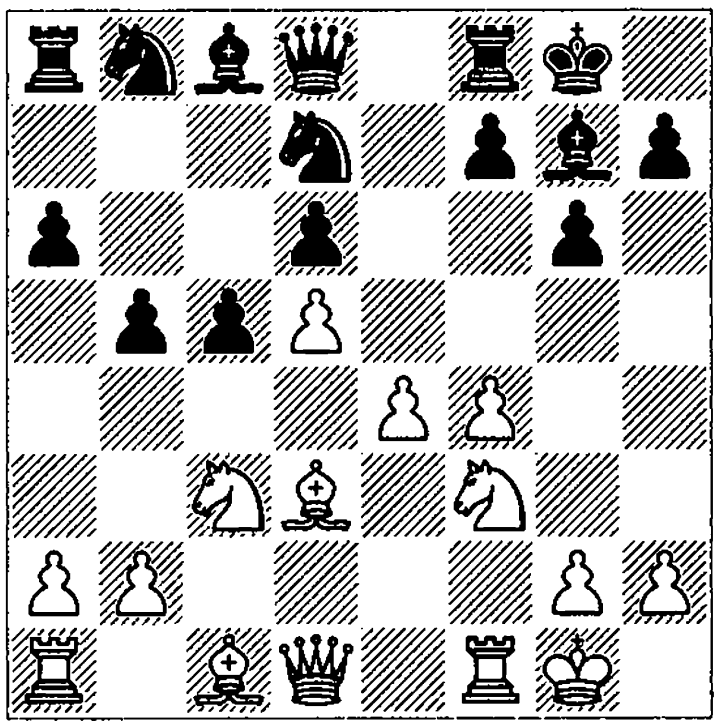
9 ♘f3

This move has become more popular lately, but I don't see it as too challenging, since Black can now expand on the queenside by ...a6 and ...b5.

9...a6 10 ♗d3

In this position, 10 ♗xd7+? is quite illogical, but has been played more often than one would ever imagine, with an overwhelming score for Black after 10...♘xd7 (see the note to White's 8th move in Line D2 of Chapter 1). And 10 ♗e2 b5 doesn't make much sense either, as White's e-pawn lacks protection. Polikarpov-Kapengut, Minsk 1976 continued 11 a4 b4 12 ♘b1 0-0 13 0-0 ♘f6 14 ♘bd2 ♖e8 15 ♗d3 ♗g4 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 (17 ♖xf3 c4!) 17...♘xd5! 18 exd5 ♗d4+ and ...♖e3.

10...b5 11 0-0 0-0 *(D)*



12 ♔h1

This is played in about 70% of the games with 9 ♘f3. White wants to see what Black is doing, and dodges checks along the diagonal (...c4 and ...♕b6). He should get nothing special from 12 ♗e3 ♘f6 or 12 a3 ♘b6. The following alternatives are a bit more challenging, but probably of equivalent worth:

a) 12 ♕e1 ♖e8 13 ♕g3 c4 14 ♗c2 b4 15 ♘a4 (15 ♘d1 ♘c5 16 ♘f2 ♘bd7 17 ♘g5!? ♘f6 18 ♗e3? ♘h5 19 ♕f3 h6 ∓ Suveges-Retter, corr. 1996) 15...♘f6 16 f5 ♗d7 (16...♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 may well be good) 17 ♗g5 ♗b5 = Cherepkov-Suetin, Sochi 1961.

b) 12 ♖e1 b4!? (I like 12...♘b6! with the idea ...♗g4 and/or ...c4 and ...b4) 13 ♘a4 ♘f6? (13...♖e8!) 14 h3? (White should play 14 e5! with the idea 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘xd5 16 ♗g5 ♘e7 17 ♘xc5 ±) 14...♗d7 15 a3 ♖e8 16 axb4 cxb4 17 ♖a2 ♗b5 18 b3 ♖a7 = intending ...♖ae7, Nechaev-M.Kopylov, Donetsk Z 1998.

c) 12 f5 c4!? (giving up d4 like this can be risky; 12...♘e5 =) 13 ♗c2

♘c5?! (13...♘e5! 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 is still equal) 14 ♗g5! ♕b6, T.Reich-Bäuml, Bad Wörishofen 2000, and now 15 ♗e3, intending ♘d4 or ♗d4 at some point, is better for White.

12...♘b6

Hébert highlights this move in his Benoni CD, and I think that it's an appealing one, since it covers c4, makes room for ...♘8d7, allows ...♗g4 in some lines, and even opens up the idea of ...♖a7 followed by ...♖c7 or ...♖e7. 12...♖e8 is the most common move and it is perfectly playable, but Black has to be careful after f5, since the rook is no longer defending f7. Black has also played 12...♘f6, 12...c4, and even the immediate 12...♖a7.

13 f5

The only move I've found in databases – it's very logical to prevent ...♗g4 and free the c1-bishop at the same time.

13...b4

Driving the knight towards the kingside may not be best. A good line is the straightforward 13...♘8d7 14 ♗g5 (14 fxg6 fxg6! is an original approach: 15 ♘g5 ♘e5 16 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 17 ♗e2 ♕e7 ∓ Dargena-Delarge, corr. 1985) 14...♗f6 15 ♗f4 ♕e7 (15...b4!? 16 ♘a4! ♘xa4 17 ♕xa4 ♗xb2 18 ♖ab1 ♗e5 19 ♘xe5 dxe5 20 ♗h6 with unclear compensation) 16 ♕d2 ♗b7 17 ♖ae1 ♖ac8 = Glek-Anikaev, Minsk 1983.

14 ♘e2 ♘8d7

An incredibly messy game that I am afraid to comment upon continued 14...a5 15 ♗g5 ♗f6 16 ♕d2 ♖a7 17 ♕f4 ♗xg5 18 ♘xg5 h6 19 ♘h3 g5 20 ♕g3 ♕f6 21 ♘f2 ♖d8 22 ♘g4 ♕h8 23 e5 ♘8d7 24 f6 ♘xe5 25 ♘xe5 dxe5 26 ♕xe5 ♘xd5 27 ♖ad1 ♗e6 28 ♗f5 ♗xf5 29 ♕xf5 ♖ad7 30 ♘g3 ♕h7 and, in Glek-Tataev, Moscow 1992, Black was doing well, although he later lost.

15 ♗g5 ♗f6!

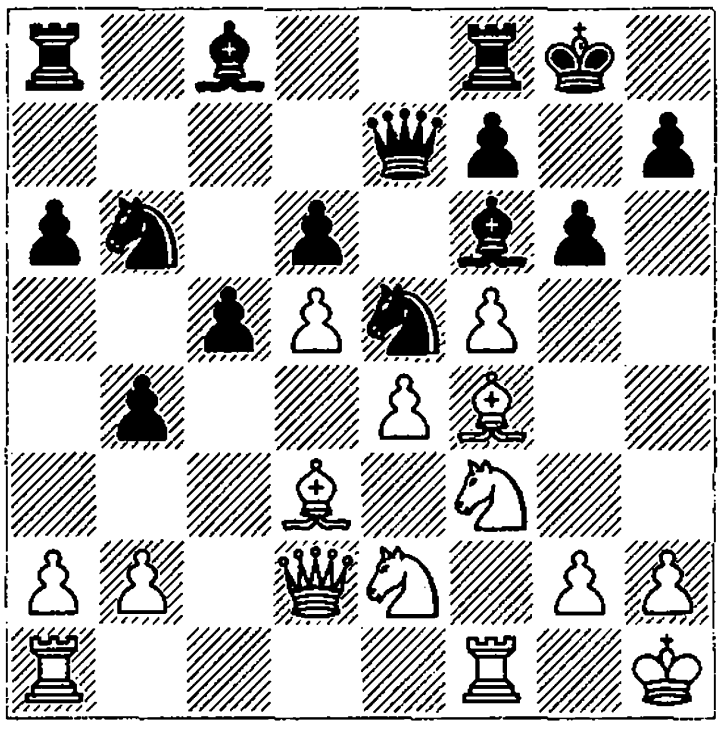
This tends to be the best answer to ♗g5 in cases where Black has already made progress on the queenside.

16 ♗f4

16 ♗h6 ♖e8 is equal.

16...♕e7 17 ♕d2 ♘e5 *(D)*

Hébert mentions 17...c4!? 18 ♗b1 gxf5!? 19 ♕xb4 ♘xd5 20 exd5 ♕xe2, but I don't like 21 ♗xf5 for Black, or even his continuation 21 ♘d2 c3!? 22 bxc3 ♖b8, due to 23 ♕xd6 ♗xc3 24 ♗xf5!.



18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 20 f6!?

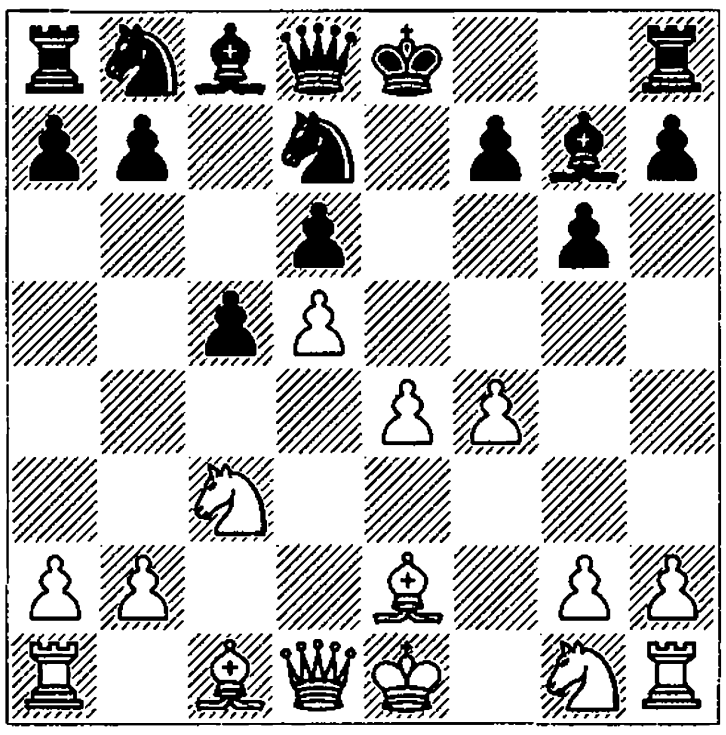
This is Schipkov-Szalanczy, Bucharest 1993. Now Hébert suggests either 20...g5!? "or the simple and possibly even safer 20...♔h8 21 ♕h6 ♖g8". Since Black has a long-term positional advantage in the latter case,

White must move quickly, and Hébert gives 22 ♘g1 (intending ♘f3-g5; 22 ♖f4?? g5) 22...♖a7!, when instead of his 23 ♘f3?! ♕xf6, White might try 23 ♖f4 (23 ♖f3 c4 24 ♖c1 ♗g4!) 23...g5 24 ♖f2. Then a plausible sequence might be 24...♘d7 25 ♖af1 ♖g6 26 ♕h3 g4 27 ♕h4 ♕g5 28 ♕xg5 ♖xg5 followed by ...♘e5. This probably isn't much, but I'd rather be Black.

In general, I don't think that allowing ...b5 can be White's best course.

A32)

9 ♗e2 *(D)*



B

Trying to get back to a Four Pawns Attack with the knight misplaced on d7. However, the bishop isn't well placed on e2 except in positions where e5 is possible.

9...♕h4+

Consistent with the themes of this section. Black wants to weaken White's kingside before continuing with his development.

Naturally, 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♖e8 11 0-0 can't be bad:

a) A rare and complex idea is 11...♗xc3!? 12 bxc3 ♖xe4, which most players would shy away from (if only for practical reasons) because White's dark-squared bishop is unopposed. However, this sequence might also discourage some players of White, as Black has won a central pawn. A game which favoured Black went 13 ♗d3 (13 ♘g5 ♖e8 14 f5 Hébert; then 14...♘f6!? 15 fxg6 hxg6 is complex) 13...♖e8 14 c4 ♘f6 15 ♗b2 ♗g4! 16 ♕c2 ♘bd7 17 ♘g5 ♕e7! (threatening ...♗e2) 18 ♕c3 ♕e3+ 19 ♖f2 (19 ♔h1 ♗e2!) 19...♗f5 (19...b5! 20 h3 ♗f5 21 ♗xf5 ♕xc3 22 ♗xc3 gxf5 23 cxb5 ♘xd5 ∓) 20 ♗xf5 ♕xc3 21 ♗xc3 gxf5 ∓ Shafii-Sabitov, Kuala Lumpur 1993.

b) After 11...♘a6, 12 ♔h1 has kept the advantage in several games, but J.Ivanov's proposal of 12...♘b6! with the idea of ...c4 and ...♘c5 highlights the one-dimensionality of 9 ♗e2. Then 13 ♗e3? ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♖xe4 compares very poorly with line 'a' for White, and 13 ♗d2 c4 or 13 ♘d2 ♗d7 poses Black no problems.

10 g3

We will see 10 ♔f1 and similar ideas below. In this case, Black has the interesting move 10...♕e7 11 ♘f3, when 11...♗xc3!? 12 bxc3 ♕xe4 exploits the fact that White can't mobilize quickly with his king on f1. If that looks too risky, 11...♘b6 12 ♔f2 ♗g4 13 ♖e1 ♘8d7 is solid, intending 14 e5 0-0!.

10...♕e7

Or 10...♕d8 11 ♘f3 (11 ♘b5!? ♘b6 12 e5 dxe5 13 d6 ♘a6 14 fxe5, Paramos

Dominguez-Reinaldo Castineira, Mondariz 1996, and now 14...♗xe5 15 ♘f3 ♗g7 would make White justify his play) 11...0-0 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♘a6 (13...♗xc3!?) 14 ♗f1 ♘b6 15 h3 c4 16 e5 ♘b4! 17 g4 (an odd move, but the forcing 17 a3 allows 17...♘d3 18 ♗xd3 cxd3 19 g4 dxe5 20 ♕xd3 e4! 21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22 ♕xe4 f5!) 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♘6xd5 19 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗xc4 ♘b6 22 ♗b3 ♗e6 ∓ (pawn-structure) Borik-Hort, Bundesliga 1982/3.

11 ♘f3 ♘b6!? 12 0-0 ♗g4 13 e5

Else just ...♘8d7 follows, with ...♗xf3 at the appropriate moment.

13...0-0 14 ♘e4

More accurate looks 14 ♘b5 ♘c8 15 ♗e3 b6 =.

14...dxe5

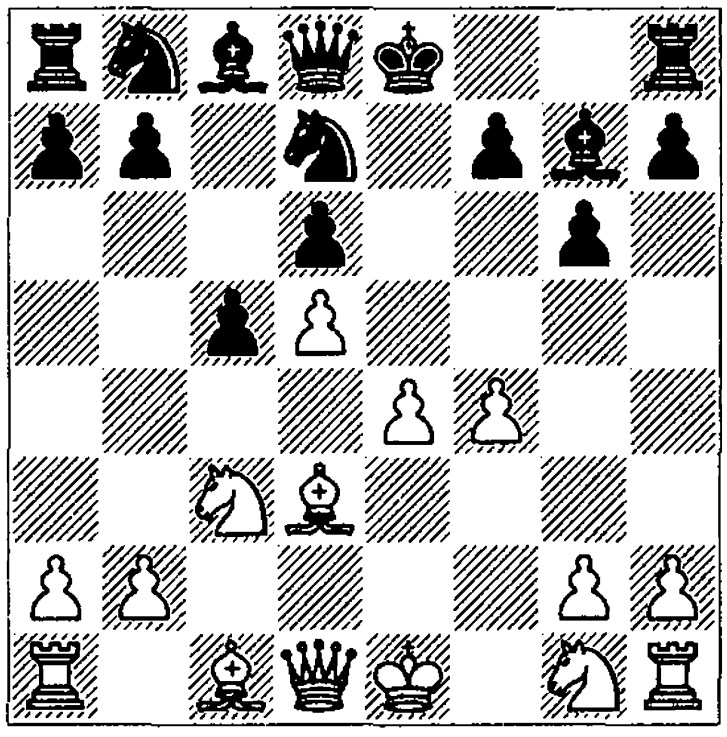
14...♘c8!? is still possible, to avoid complications.

15 d6 ♕e8 16 fxe5 ♘8d7

Korzubov-Kapengut, Minsk 1985. This has been assessed as equal, but it may well be better for Black, since White's centre is crumbling.

A33)

9 ♗d3 *(D)*


B

This simple retreat was White's main attacking try for many years, and is still extremely important. Most recent sources (e.g., Schneider, *ECO* and *NCO*) give 9 ♗d3 as ending in equality or an unclear position. However, there are a variety of recommendations as to how to do this, and no definitive answer. For that reason, I will examine 9 ♗d3 in detail.

9...♕h4+!?

Again this disruptive move is used to weaken White's kingside at the cost of a tempo. I didn't approve of 9...♕h4+ when I wrote my book some years ago, but now I think that the idea of playing a later ...♗g4 is much more effective than I realized. Black loses less time than it seems after g3 and his retreat to e7 or d8, since White has weakened his kingside and has to deal with a potential ...♗h3 or ...♗g4. This in turn takes time to counter, e.g., by ♔g2 and h3.

Still, since 9...♕h4+ is a bit eccentric, I should mention that theory considers the 'main line' with ...♘a6-c7 equal. I'm not sure, but very briefly, the primary line goes 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 ♔h1 (12 ♕e1 b5! 13 ♘xb5 c4 14 ♗xc4 ♖xb5 15 ♗xb5 ♕b6+ =; 12 ♗e3 ♘c7 13 a4 a6 14 ♗f2! b5 15 ♗h4 ♗f6 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6) 12...♘c7 13 a4 a6 14 a5 b5 (14...♖e8! 15 ♗e3 b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 =) 15 axb6 ♘xb6 16 f5 (16 ♗e3!? f5 17 e5 ♗b7 ∓) 16...gxf5 17 exf5 ♘bxd5, which is thought equal. This is certainly worth considering for Black. Nevertheless,

White has other attacking ideas after 11...♖b8, and I'm not unreservedly enthusiastic about it.

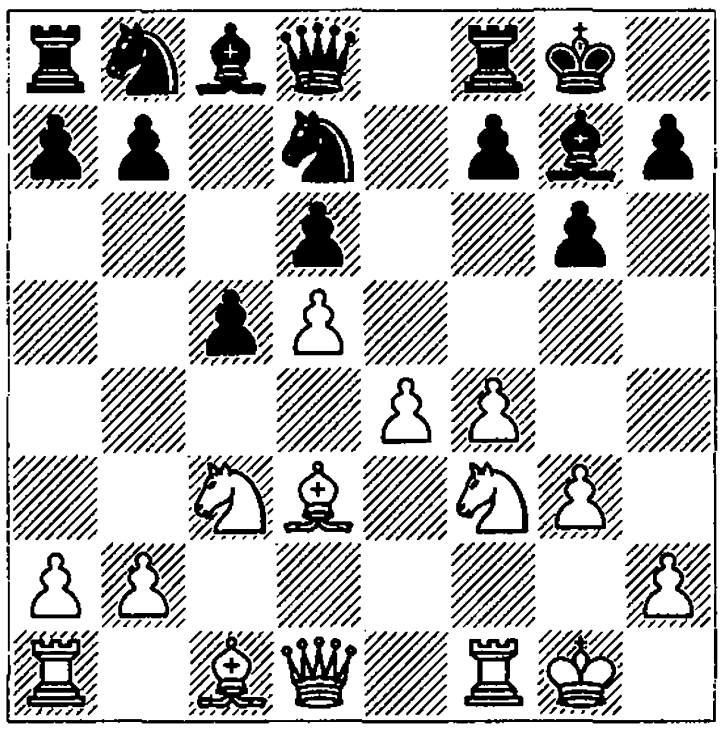
10 g3

10 ♔f1!? is extremely rare here. Please refer to the ♔f1 lines in Line A34; for example, 10...♕d8 11 ♘f3 a6 12 a4 is analysed there.

10...♕e7

The most common move, but I think that 10...♕d8(!) is definitely playable, and probably even better. Although Black loses a tempo (i.e., White's ♘f3; as explained above, g3 hardly counts as a 'tempo'), White's kingside is weakened and Black's queen can go to the queenside to apply pressure. Also, in cases where ...♘f6 or ...♘b6 is played, White's e5 is delayed since his d-pawn is then exposed. Finally, the ugly possibility of d6 with tempo is eliminated. After 10...♕d8, play continues 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 *(D)*. One might wonder, in comparison with a line like 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘f6 11 h3 (to stop ...♗g4), why White doesn't play 12 h3 here. But in the line before us, the h-pawn is loose; e.g., 12...♖e8 13 0-0 (else ...f5) 13...♗xc3! 14 bxc3 ♘f6 ∓.

B



From the diagram (*see top of next column*), 12...a6 13 a4 transposes to Line A3413 (via the move-order 9 a4 ♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕d8 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 a6 13 ♗d3). That is a recommended repertoire line, but Black has some nice alternatives with this particular move-order:

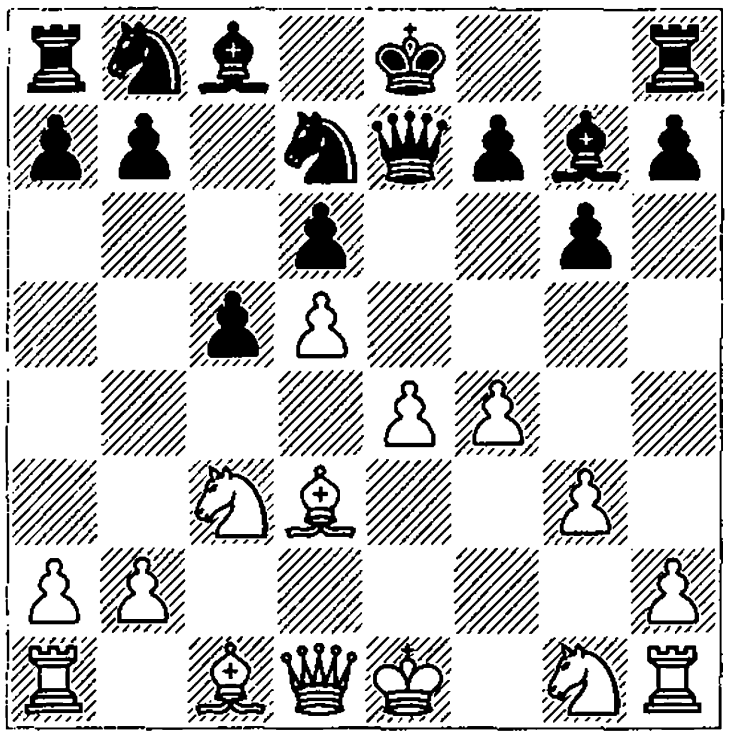
a) 12...♘b6 and now:

a1) 13 a4 ♗h3 (or 13...♗g4 14 a5 ♘c8) 14 ♖e1 ♗g4 15 a5 ♘6d7 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘a6 =.

a2) 13 ♔g2 (to stop ...♗h3 and prepare h3) 13...♗g4 14 h3 ♗xf3+ 15 ♕xf3 ♘8d7 (I will discuss this basic type of position at length below, in the note to Black's 15th move) 16 ♖e1 ♖e8. It's hard for White to make progress now; for example: 17 ♗e3 ♖c8 18 ♖ac1 a6!? 19 ♗f2 ♘a8 20 a4 (20 e5 dxe5 21 f5 e4!? 22 ♗xe4 ♘e5 23 ♕f4 b5 24 ♖cd1 ♘c4 25 ♕c1 ♘xb2! 26 ♕xb2 b4 with an excellent game) 20...c4 21 ♗c2 ♕a5 with an equal position.

b) 12...♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♘b6 14 ♕b3 (14 ♔g2 is met by 14...♗g4, as usual; 14 f5 makes less sense with the rook on e1 instead of f1; Black plays 14...♘8d7 =, which you should compare with similar lines below) 14...♗g4 15 ♘d2 ♘a6 16 ♔g2 ♕c8! with plenty of play; for example, 17 a4 (17 ♘b5 ♗h3+ 18 ♔h1 ♕d8 19 ♘f3 ♗g4! 20 ♔g2 ♘b4 with ...♕d7, ...♗xf3+ and ...♕h3 in mind, and answering 21 ♗f1 by 21...♘4xd5) 17...♗h3+ 18 ♔h1 ♘b4 19 ♗b5 ♘d7 20 ♘f3 ♗g4 21 ♖f1 a6 22 ♗e2 f5!.

We now return to 10...♕e7 *(D)*:



11 ♘f3

11 ♕e2 0-0 12 ♘f3 tends to waste a tempo for White in the ...♗g4 lines where Black plays ...♗xf3. One game went 12...♘b6 13 0-0 ♗g4 14 a4 a5?! (an odd move in an odd game, paralysing the queenside; Black has no problems after 14...♘8d7 or 14...a6 15 a5 ♘c8) 15 ♗d2 ♘8d7 16 ♘d1?! (16 ♕g2 =) 16...♖fe8 17 ♕g2 c4 18 ♗c2 ♘c5 19 ♖e1 ♕d7 ∓ hitting the a-pawn and contemplating ...f5, Hein-Burmeister, Germany tt 1992/3.

11...0-0 12 0-0

Again, as in the line 10...♕d8 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 h3 (note to Black's 10th move), the move 12 h3?! (to prevent ...♗g4) is too slow. Among other moves, 12...f5! at least equalizes.

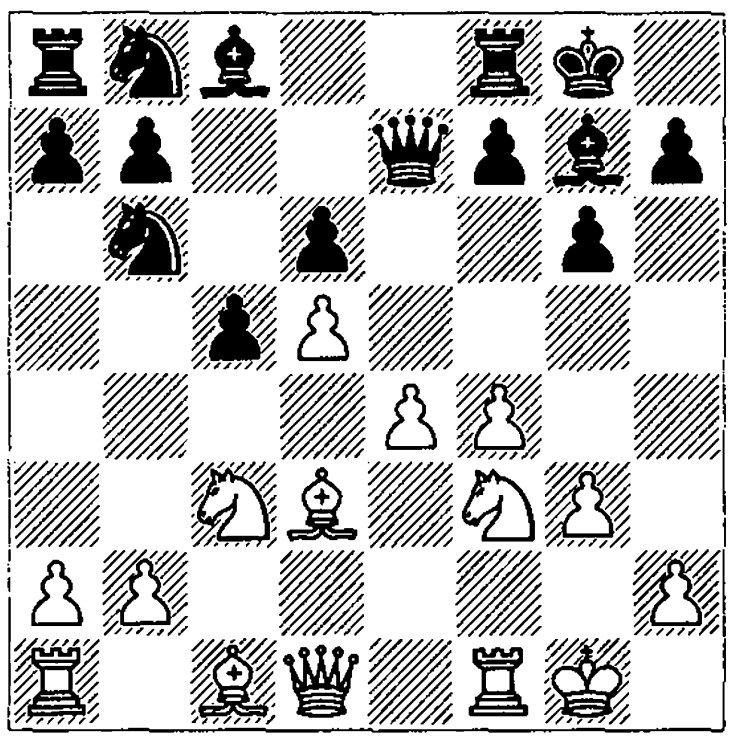
12...♘b6

With the usual idea of ...♗g4 or ...♗h3. It's important to notice that 12...a6 13 a4 ♘f6 transposes to Line A3423, an alternative defence that the reader might like. Here there are two other moves which deserve attention:

a) 12...♘a6 13 ♖e1 (13 f5 ♘e5 = – compare note 'a' to White's 13th move; 13 e5 dxe5 14 f5 is a standard idea, but in this case 14...♘b6 is a good answer) 13...♘b6 14 ♗f1 (14 e5 ♗g4 is equal) 14...♗g4 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 with a typical position that should be equal. Black might even try the odd 16...f5!? (16...♘d7 would be normal, followed by queenside expansion) 17 e5 dxe5 18 fxe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗f4 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h2 ♕g7 21 d6 ♖f7!?, when White has definite compensation, but probably no more than a pawn's worth.

b) 12...♘f6!? 13 ♔g2 (13 e5 ♘e8 14 ♕b3 ♗g4 is again very unclear; 13 ♖e1 ♗g4 14 e5 ♘e8 15 e6 fxe6 16 dxe6 ♘c7 17 ♗c4 ♘c6 ∓) 13...♗g4 14 h3 ♗xf3+ 15 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 =; e.g., 16 ♗d2 a6 17 a4 ♖fc8!? 18 b3 ♖ab8 19 ♖ae1 ♘e8! = intending ...♘c7 and ...b5. See the note to Black's 15th move for general comments about this structure.

We now return to 12...♘b6 *(D)*:



13 ♔g2

This is the most frequent move in such positions, preventing ...♗h3 and

preparing h3. However, the alternatives deserve investigation:

a) 13 f5!? is a dangerous attacking move (which, however, gives up e5): 13...♘8d7 14 ♗g5 ♗f6 (14...f6?! 15 ♗f4 ♘e5 ±; Black's miserable g7-bishop guarantees White the advantage) 15 ♗h6 ♖e8! (15...♗g7 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 ♕d2 with an attack) 16 ♔h1 ♘e5 (16...gxf5 17 ♘h4!) 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♕d2 and now:

a1) After 18...c4? (a premature move, following Black's good play so far), Ravikumar-Thorsteins, Copenhagen 1982 continued instructively: 19 ♗c2 ♘d7 (19...♗d7 20 ♖f2) 20 ♖f2! a6 21 ♖af1 b5. Now White could have played 22 fxg6! fxg6 23 ♖f3, intending ♕f2, thereby gaining a large advantage.

a2) Black can keep the balance with the solid 18...f6, when White finds it difficult to continue the attack.

a3) Black can try the more ambitious 18...♗d7!?, preserving the possibility of ...♗d4 among other ideas. Play might then continue 19 ♖f2 gxf5 and now 20 ♖af1 f6 or 20 exf5 ♗xc3!? (20...f6!?) 21 ♕xc3 f6 22 ♖f4 ♔h8 =. Black is threatening ...♘xd5 (especially in conjunction with a potential ...♗c6), and his good bishop on d7 can support a queenside advance.

b) 13 a4 is Nunn's suggestion, to which I gave an '!' in my book. However, 13...♗g4 14 a5 ♘c8 intending ...♘d7 is a type of position we will see in very similar examples below, and not at all bad for Black.

c) 13 ♖e1 ♗g4 14 ♗f1 was played in Sliwa-Gromek, corr. 1960. Then, as well the natural 14...♘8d7, Black can try 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♘xd5 =, when his extra pawn and solid pawn-structure compensate for the bishops. An example would be 17 ♗b2 (17 ♗d2 ♘c7) 17...♘c7 18 ♖ad1 (18 c4 ♘c6 19 ♖ad1 ♘e6) 18...♘c6.

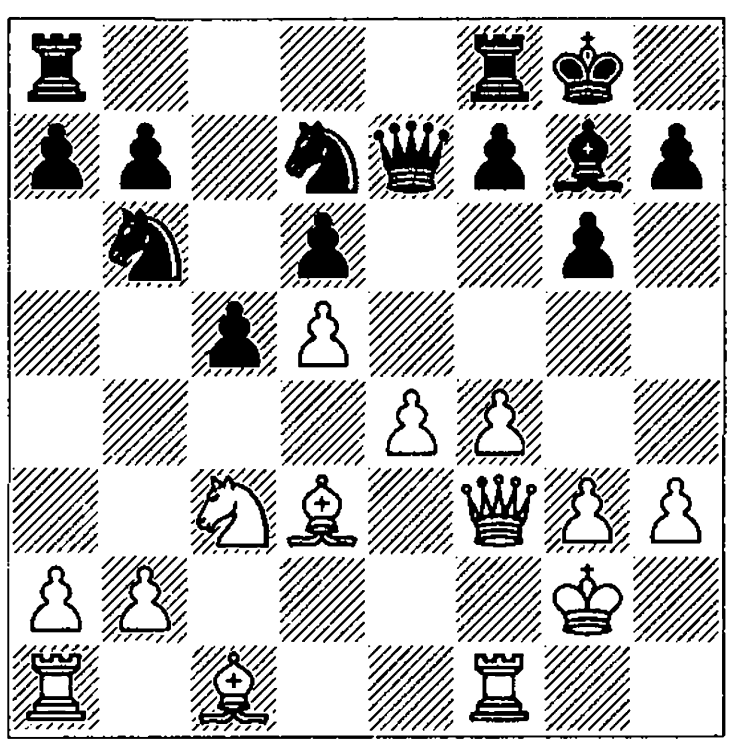
13...♗g4

13...♘a6 has been played here, but I don't like 14 h3! c4 15 ♗c2 ♘c5, when 16 e5! dxe5 17 fxe5 is not attractive for Black, since 17...♗xe5? is met by 18 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♗f4 ♕e7 20 ♕d4!. Nevertheless, perhaps Black can improve here.

14 h3 ♗xf3+ 15 ♕xf3 ♘8d7 *(D)*

Black can also play for immediate activity by 15...c4 16 ♗c2 ♘a6 17 a3 ♘c5. This gives up d4 in return for queenside play. Lau-Dolmatov, Graz U-26 Wcht 1981 continued 18 ♗e3 ♘bd7 19 ♖ad1 ♖ab8 20 ♖fe1 b5 21 e5! b4 (21...dxe5 22 d6 ♕d8 23 ♕d5!) 22 axb4 ♖xb4 23 ♗c1! ½-½. Kapengut rightly calls this ±, but Black can hold on after 23...dxe5 24 d6 ♕d8 25 ♘d5 ♖b5! 26 ♘e7+ ♔h8 27 ♘c6 ♕a8!.

W



Since this general type of position arises quite often in these lines, I should say some words about it. One should be aware that, given a knight on d7, Black's other knight may also be on e8, c7, or even (after White's a4) on b4, and the general discussion won't change that much. One should also note that, because of White's g3, he had to waste an extra move (♔g2) to achieve h3 in comparison with similar Pawn-Storm lines without ...♕h4+.

Black's initial idea is prophylactic, that is, to prevent White from making pawn advances and freeing his two bishops. Thus his exaggerated concentration of forces versus e5, for that move would tend to unleash all of White's pieces. If Black succeeds in limiting White's ideas, he can then turn his attention to advancing his own natural majority on the queenside, supported by rooks and a knight. This advance, in conjunction with the powerful bishop on g7, will ultimately wreak havoc on White's queenside. Crucially, that attack will also create natural outposts for Black's knights, which for the moment serve a defensive role. As in many Benoni variations, it's difficult for White to keep queenside lines closed indefinitely. The familiar plan of ♖b1 and b4 is not very practical given the disposition of both sides' forces.

So what can White do in such positions? Sometimes he can play e5 anyway, sacrificing a pawn for activity. Assuming that Black has prevented that, White could always play f5, but this gives Black a grip on the dark squares and in particular, the e5-square, e.g. for ...♘e5. Although f5 must always be taken into consideration, it tends to be a better move if it limits the scope of a light-squared bishop on c8 or d7, which in this variation has already been exchanged. One might be tempted to play g4 instead, but in many cases that can weaken the kingside. For one thing, White has to be careful of a well-timed ...g5, sometimes supported by ...h6 and ...♘h7, which might secure the e5-square and imprison White's light-squared bishop. Also, the move g5 by White is often no achievement, because Black plays ...f6 and activates his rook.

What's left? Let's compare two very typical plans in the similar main-line Taimanov Attack structures, but without ...♕h4+. One is the familiar pawn sacrifice e5, and after ...dxe5, f5. Thus in one fell swoop, White frees his c1-bishop, secures e4 for a knight, renders Black's g7-bishop 'bad', opens up the tactical possibility of d6, and even prepares g4-g5! Against this dangerous plan, Black should be prepared to make the counter-sacrifice ...e4, liberating his g7-bishop, negating several of White's just-mentioned advantages, and gaining e5 for his own knight. In a minority of cases, he may be able to hold the fort by omitting ...e4, defending key squares, and exchanging some pieces. For this purpose, a knight on the blockading square d6 can be useful. In general, the e5/f5 sacrifice is still the biggest worry for Black in this position, especially with a queen on f3. See the examples below. I

won't pretend that the defence is undemanding, but White can easily overextend as well.

I had always thought that White was somewhat better in the comparable positions in the main Taimanov lines, primarily because of White's final plan, which was to transfer a bishop to g3 (or sometimes h4) by ♗d2-e1-g3 or ♗e3-f2-g3, significantly strengthening his kingside attack. However, in our ...♕h4+ lines, the g3-square is already occupied by a pawn! To my mind, this is a significant difference, since g4 has certain drawbacks as already mentioned. All told, I'm convinced that White has no straightforward way to launch a successful attack here, and that Black's chances are quite as real as White's.

16 a4

As noted above, the dangerous 16 e5!? dxe5 17 f5 is possible, and can be met by the complicated 17...e4!? (or, more calmly, 17...♖ae8 18 ♗e4 ♘c4! =) 18 ♗xe4! (18 ♘xe4 ♘xd5 19 ♗g5 f6! 20 ♗c4 {20 ♗d2 ♘e5 ∓} 20...♔h8 21 ♗xd5 fxg5 and Black's pieces are active) 18...♖fe8!? 19 ♖e1 (19 ♗c2?! ♗xc3 20 ♕xc3 ♘xd5) 19...♘e5 (even 19...♗xc3!? 20 bxc3 ♘e5 can be considered) 20 ♕e2 ♘ec4!?. The ...e4 idea is not necessarily best here (see 17...♖ae8), but it would appear that things are dynamically balanced.

The text-move (16 a4) is Lukacs-Psakhis, Sarajevo 1981, which went 16...c4 17 ♗c2 ♘c5 18 ♗e3 ♘bd7 19 ♖ad1 a6, and now Kapengut's 20 ♖fe1! would give us the same position as Lau-Dolmatov above (note to Black's 15th), except that White has played a4 instead of a3 and therefore gains crucial time for his central attack! Instead of these hurried solutions with ...c4, I think that Black should consider 16...♖ab8 17 a5 ♘c8 intending ...a6 and ...b5, since it discourages the idea of a break by e5. For example, 18 e5 (18 ♗e3 b5!? {among others} 19 ♘xb5 a6 20 ♘c7 ♖xb2+ 21 ♔h1 ♖b7, winning the exchange for a pawn, but with mutual chances) 18...dxe5 19 f5 ♘d6. This is an example of the second response to the e5/f5 breakthrough given above. Black's position looks solid enough, and he can still contemplate returning the pawn by ...e4, or hunker down in positions like 20 ♗e4 ♖bd8.

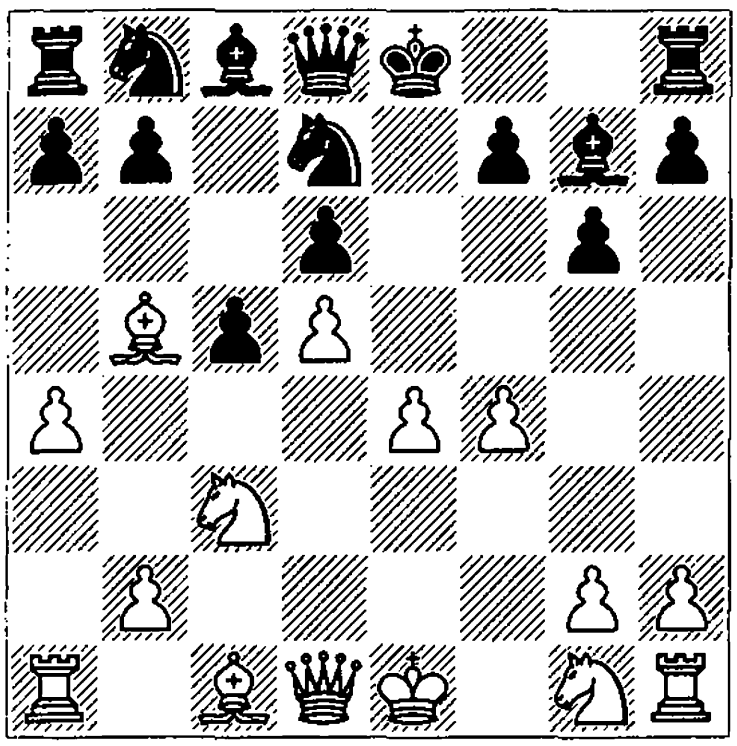
In conclusion, I think that the 9...♕h4+ variation in response to 9 ♗d3 offers good practical chances. Its theoretical status is as yet unresolved, to some extent because 9 ♗d3 is rather out of favour (9 a4 is played about seven times as much in my database). I chose 9...♕h4+ because it is consistent and easy to learn. Note that 10 g3 ♕d8 looks like a safer line if you don't like continuing 10...♕e7. The reader should also note the transposition to the 9 a4 lines of the next section by 12...a6 13 a4.

A34)

9 a4 *(D)*

This line of the Taimanov Benoni has caused Black many headaches, and has helped to drive many Benoni players away from the 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 move-order. White

B



reasons that a4 is necessary in any case to prevent queenside expansion by ...a6 and ...b5. But now he is able to respond after Black has committed to a plan; for example, he may want to put the bishop on e2, d3 or c4 when it is attacked by, e.g., ...a6 or ...♘a6-c7. This flexibility has made 9 a4 by far the most popular continuation over the last 20 years.

Because of the importance of this variation, I will analyse my recommendations in great detail.

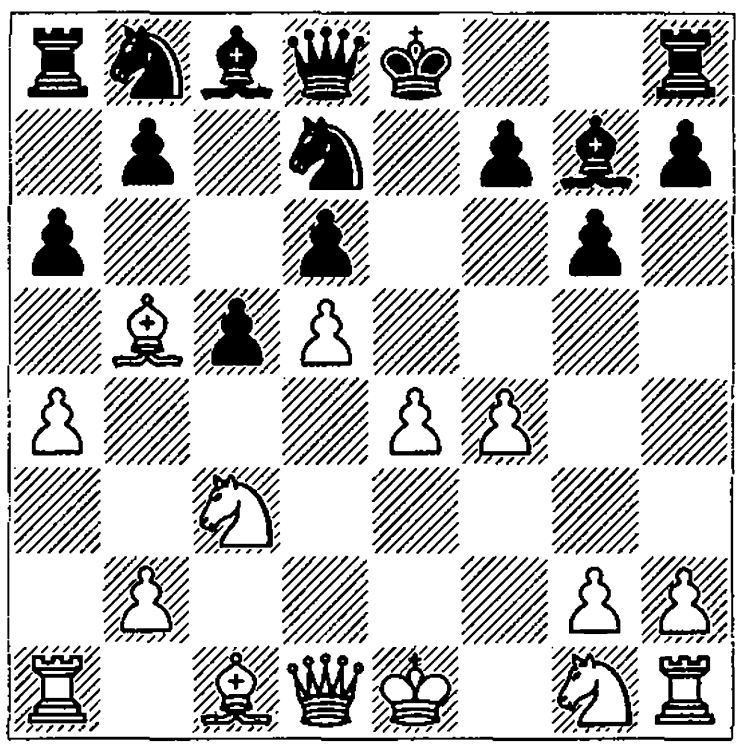
9...♕h4+

Once again, this manoeuvre serves to weaken White's kingside as a basis for future counterplay.

But here I should make a very important point about move-orders. In the lines I am proposing, Black will play ...a6 in the near future, and White will have a choice between three retreats (ignoring ♗xd7 for the moment): ♗c4, ♗d3 and ♗e2. If, in response to White's g3, you want to play the move ...♕e7 versus all three of these moves, or ...♕d8 versus all three moves, then the move-order before you is ideal, because it doesn't hurt to make that choice now.

If, on the other hand, you prefer to play ...♕d8 against some bishop retreats and ...♕e7 against others, you would do well to play 9...a6 *(D)* right now, to see where White's bishop is going first.

W



This also allows you to respond to one or another bishop retreat by foregoing ...♕h4+ altogether. A fairly minor drawback to this strategy is that after 9...a6 10 ♗moves ♕h4+, Black has committed himself to ...a6 in meeting the seldom-seen 11 ♔f1. The ♔f1 move (which is extremely rare and not even mentioned by some authors) is theoretically easier to meet if one has the option of playing, e.g., ...♘a6 as well as ...a6. But if you are satisfied with the ♔f1 lines in this note, then 9...a6 is the most flexible move-order. Otherwise, see the note to White's 10th move (dealing with 9...♕h4+ 10 ♔f1).

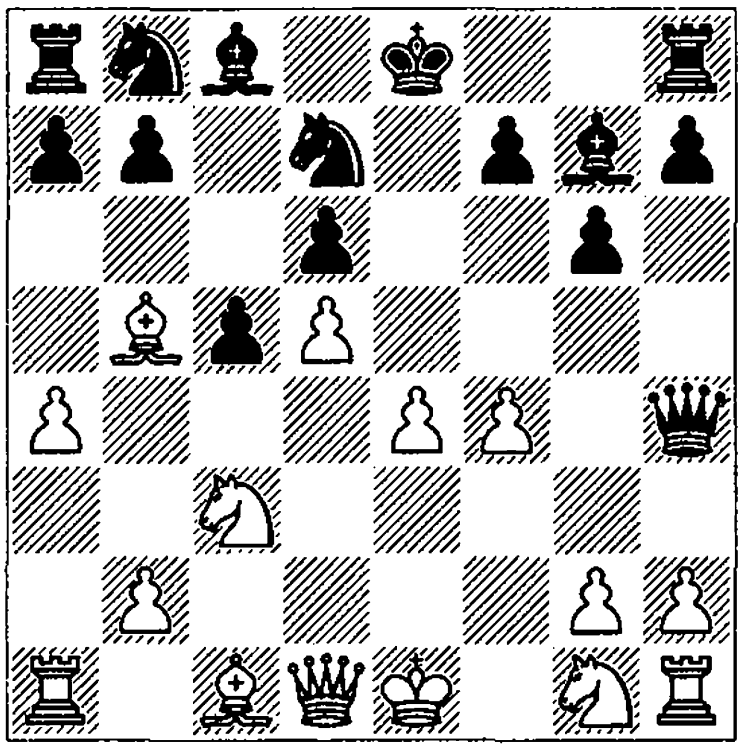
There are three ♔f1 lines which could arise after 9...a6:

a) 10 ♗c4 ♕h4+ 11 ♔f1 ♕e7 12 ♘f3, and now Black can play 12...0-0 13 ♔f2 ♘b6 14 ♗a2 ♗g4, as in the main lines, or even 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xe4, which is much better than in similar positions due to the tempo on c4 and the king on f1; e.g., 14 ♕b3 0-0 15 ♔f2 ♘f6 16 ♖e1 ♕f5 and White has less compensation than in similar lines.

b) 10 ♗e2 ♕h4+ 11 ♔f1 ♕e7 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 e5! (13 ♔f2 can be answered by 13...♗xc3!? 14 bxc3 ♘f6, while 13...♘f6 is also not bad) 13...dxe5 14 d6 ♕f6!? (more ambitious than the safe 14...♕d8) 15 fxe5 (15 ♘e4 ♕f5) 15...♘xe5 16 ♗g5 ♕e6!? (16...♕f5 17 ♘d5 ♘bc6) 17 ♘d5 ♘xf3! is unclear. Black's idea is 18 ♘c7? ♘xg5! 19 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 ∓ (or better, considering the material and White's kingposition).

c) 10 ♗d3 is probably the line in which Black's ...a6 causes him the most problems should White play ♔f1. Nevertheless, Black should be fine after 10...♕h4+ 11 ♔f1 ♕d8 (11...♕e7 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 ♔f2 transposes to note 'b1' to White's 10th move) 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 ♔f2 ♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♕a5! 15 ♗d2 (15 ♕d2!? c4 16 ♗c2 can be answered by 16...b5 17 ♘e2 b4 or 16...♘c5) 15...c4 16 ♗c2 ♕b6+ (alternatively, 16...♘c5 17 ♔g1 ♗g4 =) 17 ♔f1 ♕xb2 18 ♖e3 (18 ♖b1 ♕a3) 18...♕b6 19 ♖b1 ♕c5, and White's compensation looks insufficient.

Let's return to 9...♕h4+ *(D)*: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In what follows, I will analyse both ...♕d8 and ...♕e7 responses. After the normal 10 g3, I will include ...a6 lines in the analysis, to offer the reader maximum flexibility. This incidentally provides a way to construct your own repertoire. For example, if you play 9...a6, there are six different combinations to choose from involving ...♕h4+ and ...♕e7 or ...♕d8.

Since this is all very confusing, here's a summary:

1) Black can play either 9...a6 and 10...♕h4+, or 9...♕h4+ first.

2) Against both moves, the check might be answered by ♔f1, but that is not much to be feared.

3) The 9...♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕retreats option commits Black's queen to a single retreat against all white piece formations, yet leaves open non-...a6 possibilities.

4) The 9...a6 move-order allows Black to see where the bishop is going before he decides upon a retreat for the queen or perhaps foregoes ...♕h4+ altogether.

5) Having said that, the lines that I will analyse the most include ...a6 and could stem from 9...a6. Therefore I will look at both the moves ...♕e7

and ...♕d8 in conjunction with every bishop retreat from ...a6.

10 g3

If you followed that summary, you will see that we need to analyse one final ♔f1 situation: the lines that don't transpose to 9...a6 10 ♗retreats ♕h4+ 11 ♔f1 above. Here are a few ideas in which Black doesn't transpose to any of those lines: 10 ♔f1 0-0 11 ♘f3 ♕e7 *(D)* and now:

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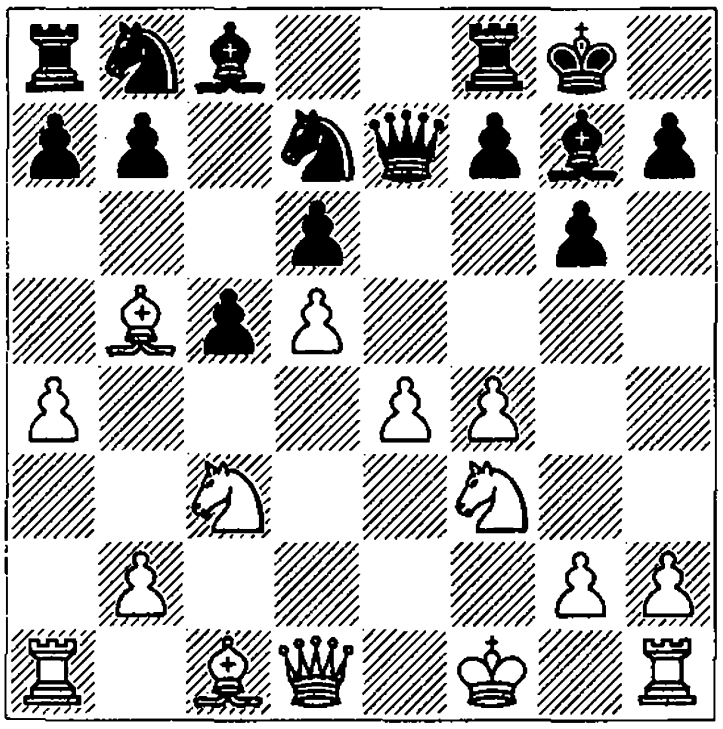


a) 12 ♗d3 ♘f6 13 h3 (13 e5 dxe5 {or 13...♘e8 =} 14 fxe5 ♘g4 15 ♗g5 ♕xg5! 16 ♘xg5 ♘e3+ 17 ♔f2 ♘xd1+ 18 ♖axd1 ♘d7!) 13...♘a6 (13...♘h5!?; 13...c4!? 14 ♗c2 ♘bd7 15 ♕e2 ♘c5 16 ♕xc4 b6! 17 ♔g1 ♗a6 =) 14 ♔f2 c4! 15 ♗b1? (15 ♗xc4 ♘xe4+ 16 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 =) 15...♘c5 16 ♘d2 ♘h5 17 g3 f5 18 ♖e1 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 fxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘b3! with a large advantage.

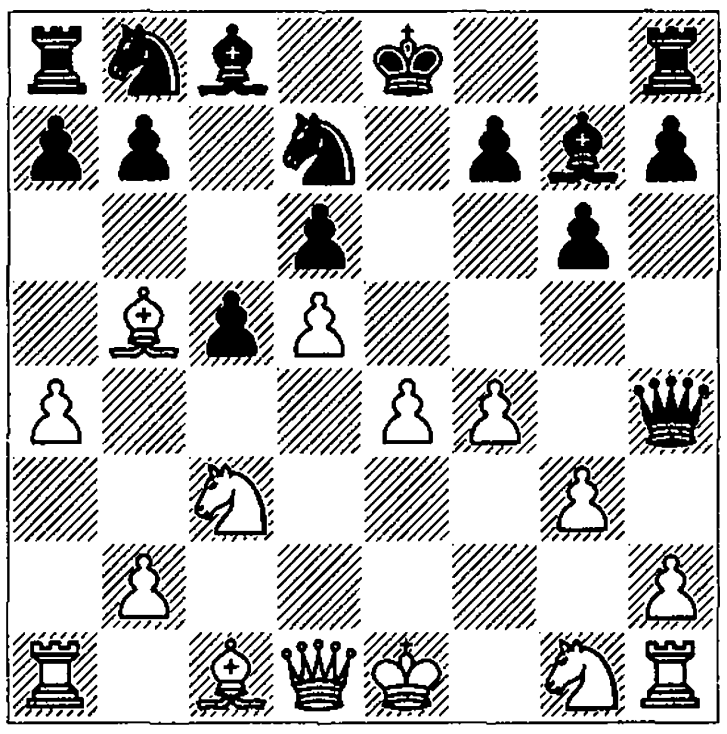
b) 12 ♔f2 and now:

b1) 12...a6 (a good move, although perhaps not even the best one; note that this move differs from the analysis above in that Black has played ...♕e7) 13 ♗d3 ♗d4+!? 14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 ♘e2 (15 ♘b1 ♘c5 16 ♖e1 ♗g4! 17 ♗e2 ♗xe2 18 ♖xe2 d3 19 ♖e1 d2! ∓) 15...♘c5 16 b4 (16 ♘g3 ♗g4 =; 16 ♖e1 ♗g4 17 ♔g1 ♖e8!) 16...♘xe4+ 17 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♕xd4, Ward-Hall, Stockholm 1988, and now simply 18...♕xd4+ 19 ♘xd4 ♘d7 intending ...♘f6 or ...♘b6 looks at least equal for Black.

b2) I like the look of the ambitious pawn-grab 12...♗xc3!? 13 bxc3 ♘f6 (13...♕xe4!? has to be considered as well), which looks reasonably safe; e.g., 14 ♘d2 ♘xe4+ 15 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 16 ♖e1 ♕f5. Moves such as 12...♗xc3 always entail risk, of course, but I think this casts serious doubt upon 12 ♔f2.

After these endless ♔f1 digressions, we finally return to 10 g3 *(D)*:

B



Here Black has a major choice:

A341: 10...♕d8 96

A342: 10...♕e7 101

The differences between these two moves will become apparent as we proceed. I tend to prefer 10...♕d8 against ♗d3 systems and 10...♕e7 against

♗e2 systems, but that is by no means written in stone.

A341)

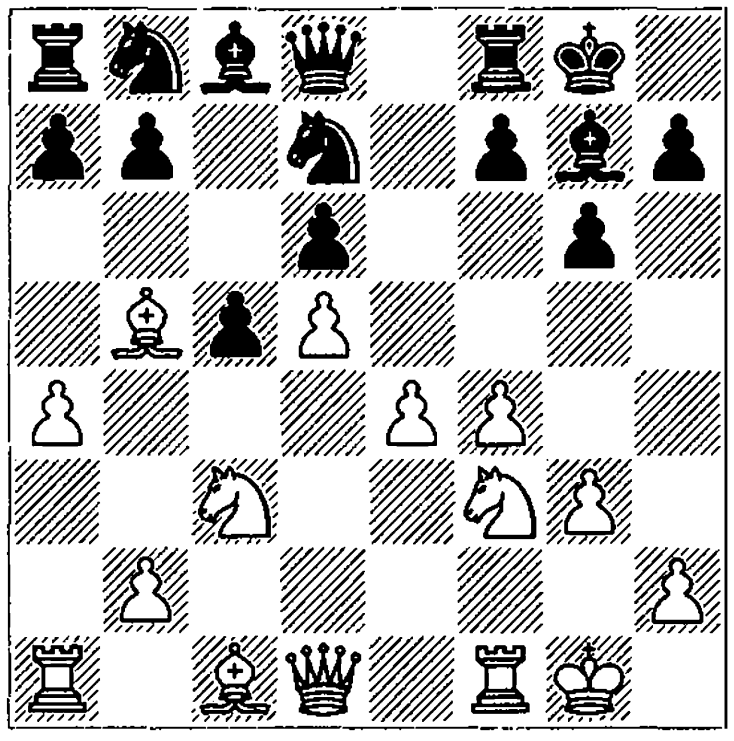
10...♕d8 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0

The untried 12 h3!? might be interesting to look at, because it acts to prevent a later ...♗g4:

a) 12...♖e8 13 0-0 a6 14 ♗d3 (14 ♗e2 ♘f6 15 e5 ♗xh3 16 exf6 ♗xf1 17 ♗xf1 ♗xf6 looks nice for Black) 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♘f6 16 ♖e1 (16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘xd5) 16...♗xh3 17 c4 ♕c8 18 ♕c2 (18 ♗b2? ♕g4! 19 ♔h2 ♘h5 ∓) 18...♗g4 19 ♕f2 ♘bd7 20 ♗b2 ♗h5!? with yet another position in which White has definite play for the pawn, but I wouldn't want to assess this.

b) 12...♘a6! is a much safer move, although not as intriguing: 13 0-0 ♘c7 14 ♗e2? (14 ♗c4? ♘b6 ∓; 14 ♗d3 ♘f6 15 ♔g2 a6 16 ♗d2 ♖b8 17 a5 ♘d7!? 18 ♖e1 b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 =, with moves like ...f5 and ...♗b7 in mind) 14...♗xc3! 15 bxc3 ♘f6 with a double attack on e4 and h3. This looks like a very comfortable solution that exploits the plodding nature of 12 h3 by developing quickly.

We now return to 12 0-0 *(D)*: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12...a6

This is the recommended move, to see where the bishop is going before ♗f1 becomes possible (i.e., after ♖e1). Note that the positions which follow 12...a6 arise from 9...a6 as well. Two alternatives of interest are:

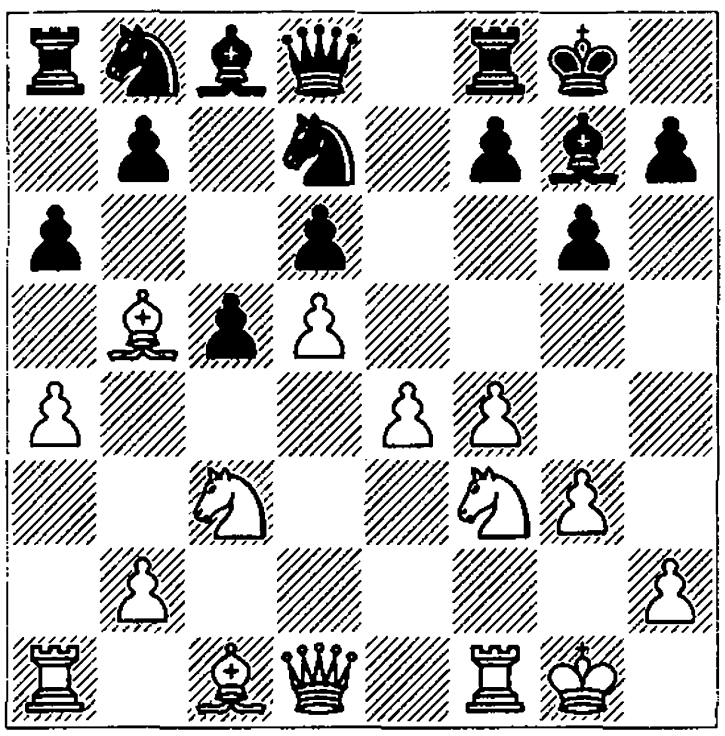
a) 12...♘a6 13 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 (perhaps 13...♕xd7!? improves, and if White continues as in the game with 14 f5 gxf5 15 ♘h4, Black has 15...fxe4 16 ♘f5? {16 ♘xe4 f5 17 ♘g5 ♘c7} 16...♕xf5! 17 ♖xf5 ♗xf5) 14 f5 c4!? (14...♘b4!?; 14...gxf5 15 ♘h4! {15 ♗g5 ♕b6} 15...fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♕e7 {16...♗h3 17 ♘f5} 17 ♖e1 with quite a serious attack, although Black might defend by ...♗d4+, ...♗e5, ...f6 and a timely ...♖ae8 and ...♘b4) 15 ♗e3 gxf5 (15...♘b4!? is extremely muddy after 16 ♘d2 ± or perhaps 16 ♘d4) 16 ♗d4! led to monstrous complications and a draw in Si-Soylu, Thessaloniki OL 1984, but White is having all the fun here.

b) 12...♖e8 13 ♖e1 a6 14 ♗f1 ♘f8!? 15 h3 ♘bd7 ± Ziatdinov-Pigusov, Tashkent 1986. This prevents most of what White wants to do, but Black himself has an even harder time finding a plan.

We now return to the position after 12...a6 *(D)*:

We now have (with apologies) a last split in the material:

A3411: 13 ♗c4 97
A3412: 13 ♗e2 98
A3413: 13 ♗d3 100



I consider the last move the most difficult to meet, but they all deserve close attention.

A3411)

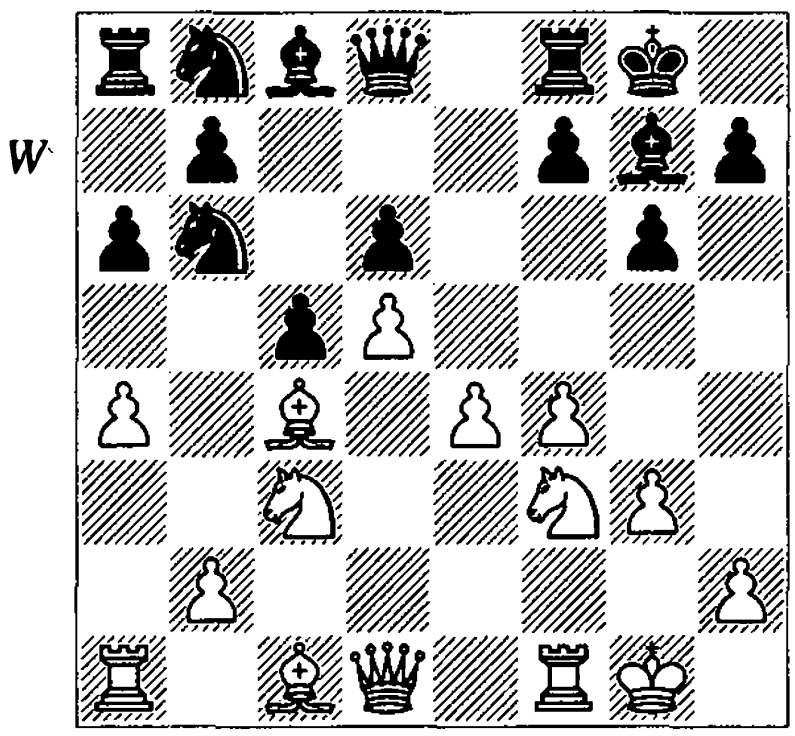
13 ♗c4

This is often given an '!', but it is probably not as dangerous as the retreat to d3. White's idea is that when e5 and possibly e6 happen, the bishop will be ideally placed.

13...♘b6 *(D)*

But this response guarantees Black an immediate ...♗g4, developing the often-cramped queenside and limiting White's central expansion.

I like the text-move best, but 13...♖e8 is a decent alternative; then 14 ♖e1 ♘f8, aimed at preventing e5-e6, is a little cramped, but Black is better situated here than in most ...♘f8 lines; e.g., 15 ♗f1 (15 e5 ♗g4) 15...♘bd7! (after 15...♗g4 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 Black's position is ideal except for the knight on f8, which needs to be on the queenside, so White should maintain a small but persistent edge) 16 h3 ♖b8 17 ♔h2 ♕c7 18 ♖e3!? c4 19 a5 b5 20 axb6 ♘xb6 21 ♖e2 ♘fd7 22 ♘d4 ♗b7 = with, e.g., ...♘c5 to follow, H.Sørensen-V.Peicheva, Copenhagen 1990. Several strong Benoni players have taken up this ...♘f8 idea, which is appropriate under some circumstances, but also runs the risk of prolonged passivity.



14 ♗a2

It seems slightly inconsistent to play 14 ♗e2 after 13 ♗c4, but White hopes to defend the kingside and at some point play a5 to establish a space advantage on both sides of the board. In fact, 14 ♗e2 led to a difficult game after 14...♗g4 15 ♘g5 (harmless are 15 ♗e3 ♖e8 and 15 ♖e1 ♘8d7 16 a5 ♗xf3 {16...♘c8} 17 ♗xf3 ♘c4 18 ♕a4 b5 19 axb6 ♘cxb6 20 ♕c2 ♖e8) 15...♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 ♕e7 17 a5 ♘c8 18 ♗d2 ♘d7 19 ♖ae1 in H.Olafsson-Psakhis, Moscow 1989. This position is given as ± in the books, but Hébert points out an improvement on the game, which itself was drawn: 19...b5 20 axb6 and instead of 20...♗d4+, which did not turn out so badly, Hébert

suggests 20...♘cxb6 21 e5?! (21 b3 c4 22 b4 a5! and 21 ♖a1 h6 22 ♘f3 c4!? 23 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 are equal) 21...dxe5 22 f5 ♘f6! and as Hébert says, "There is no breakthrough in sight for White". Apparently true, since 23 ♘ge4 can be met by 23...gxf5.

14...♗g4 15 a5 ♘c8!?

We've seen this idea before: the b8-knight goes to d7, and the c8-knight can assist in a queenside advance. Also possible is just 15...♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♘c8 17 ♗b3 ♘d7 =.

16 ♕b3

Attacking b7 and unpinning the knight at the same time. Otherwise White will have a difficult time expelling the bishop from g4.

16...♕xa5

16...♖a7!? may be playable, but seems unnecessary.

17 ♕xb7 ♘b6 18 ♗d2 ♗xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♘8d7 =

Black intends ...♖ab8 or ...♖fb8 and, in the right position, ...♘c4.

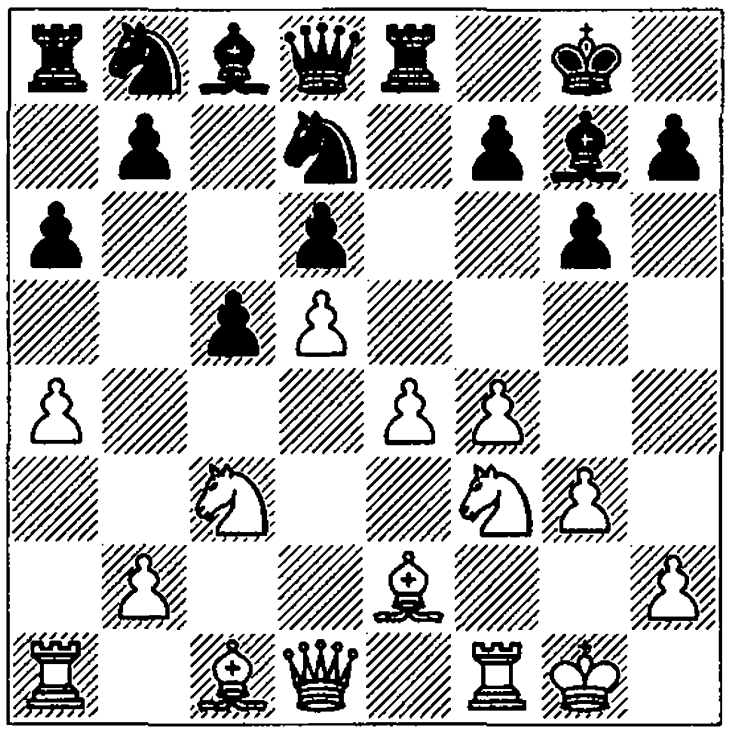
A3412)

13 ♗e2

It is unclear whether it is easier to play against this in the lines with 10...♕e7 or in those with 10...♕d8. White would just have a favourable version of the main line of the Four Pawns Attack if it weren't for that irritating weakness created by g3. As it stands, Black has full-fledged play.

13...♖e8 *(D)*

This is probably best, anticipating e5-e6 after ...♘f6 and allowing ...♘f8 in some lines. 13...♘f6 seems worse due to the rarely-played 14 e5! (most critical; 14 ♔g2 ♗g4 15 ♘d2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 ♘bd7 17 ♘c4 ♘b6 18 ♖e1 ♖e8 19 ♕d3 ♘xc4 20 ♕xc4 ♕a5! 21 ♗d2 ♕b4 = Rivas-Reinaldo Castineira, Burgas 1999) 14...♘e8 15 ♖e1 (White is better here; compare the same position in Line A3422 where ...♕e7 is already in) 15...♘c7!? 16 ♗e3 (16 exd6 ♘e8!? 17 ♗e3 ♘d7 18 ♘e4 ♗xb2 19 ♖b1 ±) 16...♖e8 17 ♘e4! dxe5 18 d6 ♘e6 19 fxe5 ♘d7 20 ♕d5 ±. These lines demonstrate the dangers of ...♘f6. If Black can successfully get ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3 in, he will usually equalize, but he has to watch out for e5. Hence the text-move, 13...♖e8.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Now (after 13...♖e8):

a) 14 ♘d2 ♘f6 (or 14...♗d4+ 15 ♔g2 ♘f6 16 ♗f3 ♕d7 17 ♔h1 ♕e7! = with ...h5 next, Geers-Betker, corr. 1990) 15 ♗f3 ♗h3! 16 ♖e1 ♘bd7 (16...♘fd7 17 ♘c4 ♘b6 is also logical) 17 ♘c4 ♘b6 18 ♘e3 h5 19 ♕d3 ♖b8 20 ♗d2, Hulak-Lobron, Zagreb 1985, and now Kharitonov suggests that 20...♘bd7 gives Black an equal game.

b) After 14 ♖e1, 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♖xe4 should be strongly considered; e.g., 16 c4! ♘f6 17 ♗b2 and then:

b1) 17...♗g4 18 h3 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♖xe1+ (19...♖xc4!? 20 ♕d3 ♖b4 21 ♗c3 ♘bd7 22 ♗xb4 cxb4 with enough for the exchange, Koskinen-Danner, corr. 1985) 20 ♕xe1 ♘bd7 21 g4 ♕b6 22 ♖b1 ♕b3 23 ♕c3 ♕xc3 24 ♗xc3 ♖b8 = Arkhipov-Sax, Hungary 1984 (material versus two bishops).

b2) Another logical idea is 17...♖e8 18 ♕b3 ♗g4! 19 ♕c3 (19 ♗f1 ♘bd7 20 ♕c3 ♕b6 21 ♘d2 ♕b4; 19 ♕xb7 ♘bd7 20 ♕b3 ♖b8 21 ♕c2 ♕b6) 19...♘bd7 ∓ with the idea ...♕b6-b4 (with ...b6 versus a5), or in some cases doubling on the e-file. I think that White is falling short here.

c) 14 ♔g2 is the normal move: 14...♘f6 (14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♖xe4 16 ♗d3 ♖e8 17 c4 ♘f6 18 h3 ♘bd7 19 ♗b2 ♖b8, with the usual and very real risks to Black, nevertheless led to a win for her in S.Clausen-E.Peicheva, Copenhagen 1989) and now:

c1) After 15 ♘d2, 15...♘bd7 16 ♗f3 ♖b8 equalized in Muir-Prasad, London 1987. One might also want to look into 15...♕d7!?; e.g., 16 f5 ♕c7 17 fxg6 hxg6 18 ♕c2 ♘bd7 19 ♘c4 ♘b6 20 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 21 a5 ♕c7 22 ♗g5 ♘d7 =.

c2) 15 e5 dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘g4 17 ♗g5!? (17 e6 fxe6 18 ♘g5, Muir-E.Peicheva, Copenhagen 1990, 18...♘e5 19 dxe6 {19 ♗f4 b6} 19...♕xd1 20 ♖xd1 b6! =) 17...♕xg5! 18 ♘xg5 ♘e3+ 19 ♔h1 ♘xd1 20 ♖axd1 ♗xe5 21 ♗c4! (21 ♖d2 f6; 21 d6 gives Black the extra possibility 21...♗xc3 22 ♗c4 ♔g7!) 21...f6 22 d6+ ♔g7 23 ♘d5! ♗g4! 24 ♘c7 ♘c6! 25 ♘ge6+ (25 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 26 ♘e6+ comes to the same thing) 25...♖xe6! 26 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♗xe6 ♖d8 28 d7 ♘d4 29 ♗h3 a5 = 30 ♖fe1!? g5! and ...h5.

d) 14 ♕c2 is a sensible move, though the queen may turn out not to be particularly well placed on c2. Then:

d1) 14...b6 is possible, contemplating ...♖a7 and/or ...♘f6.

d2) 14...♘f8 intending ...♗g4 might exploit White's queen position; e.g., 15 e5?! dxe5 16 fxe5 ♗f5 17 ♗d3 ♗xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘bd7 ∓ J.Bjerre-E.Peicheva, Vejstrup (4) 1989. Instead, 15 f5 ♘bd7 is equal, while 15 ♔g2 ♗g4 followed by ...♘bd7 is a familiar idea: Black can advance on the queenside and place his knights on d7 and b6 or f6 as needed.

d3) 14...♘f6 15 e5!? dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘g4! (16...♘xd5?! 17 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♗c4!) 17 ♗g5 ♕c7 18 d6!? (18 e6 fxe6 19 ♖ad1 c4 is double-edged) 18...♕c6 is unclear; e.g., 19 ♘b5! (19 ♗c4 ♗e6; 19 ♗b5 axb5 20 axb5 ♖xa1 21 bxc6 ♖xf1+ 22 ♔xf1 ♘xc6 with compensation) 19...♗f5 20 ♕d2 (20 ♕b3? axb5 21 ♗xb5 ♕b6) 20...♘d7 21 ♘c7 ♘gxe5 22 ♘xa8 (22 ♘h4 ♗e4 23 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 = 24 b4!? cxb4 25 ♖fc1 ♕b6+ intending 26 ♗e3? ♗h6! −+) 22...♖xa8 and now:

d31) 23 ♘h4 ♗e6!? (23...♗e4) 24 a5 b5! 25 axb6 ♘xb6 26 ♖xa6 (26 ♗xa6 ♘ec4) 26...♖xa6 27 ♗xa6 ♘ec4 28 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 ∓.

d32) 23 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 24 ♗h6 ♗h8 25 a5 (25 ♖ac1 ♗h3 26 ♖f2 ♖d8 27 ♕e3 b6 28 a5 ♗c8!? 29 ♗f1 ♕xd6 30

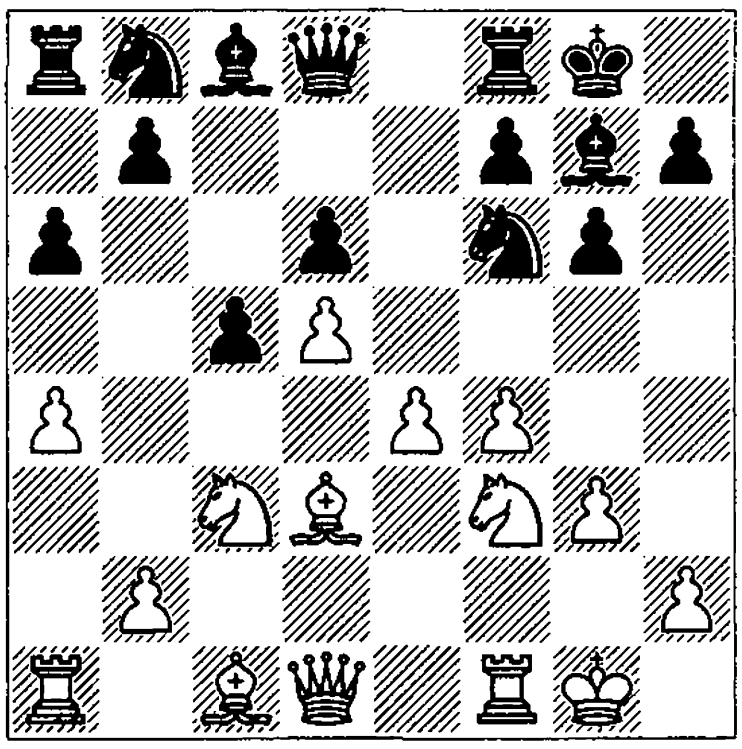
♗f4 ♘g4!) 25...♗e4 (or 25...♗h3 26 ♖f2 ♗g4!? 27 ♗f4 ♗xe2 28 ♕xe2 ♕xd6 29 ♖d1 ♕e7 =) 26 ♖ad1 c4 27 ♗f4 ♘d3 28 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 29 ♖f2 ♖e8 =.

This is not for the faint of heart.

As 14 ♕c2 isn't particularly pointed, one should also consider Black's 14th move alternatives.

A3413)

13 ♗d3 ♘f6 *(D)*



This gives Black a shot at ...♗g4 or ...♗h3, since 14 e5 loses the d-pawn. There are three logical answers, by far the most fascinating and dangerous of which is...

14 ♕b3!

Other moves:

a) 14 f5 ♘bd7 15 ♗g5 ♕c7 16 ♘d2 ♖b8 17 a5 h6 (Hébert analyses 17...♘e5 18 ♘c4 ♘xc4 19 ♗xc4 b5 20 axb6 ♕xb6 and now 21 ♖a2 gxf5!? 22 exf5 ♖e8 or 21 ♕d3 ♘g4 22 f6 ♗h8 ∓) 18 ♗f4 g5 19 ♗e3 ♘e5 20 ♘c4 ♘fg4! 21 ♗c1 ♘xc4 22 ♗xc4 ♗d4+ 23 ♔g2 ♘e5 24 ♕h5 f6!? 25 ♗e2 ♔g7 ∓ Ragnarsson-H.Olafsson, Reykjavik 1998. Perhaps not a model game, but I particularly like the way in which the e5-square eventually turned the play in Black's favour.

b) 14 ♔g2 ♗g4 (this bishop might not get out if White is allowed to play h3 after, for example, 14...♘bd7 or 14...♖e8) 15 h3 ♗xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 reaches a standard position of a type we've seen before. Black's pieces develop smoothly, he has restraint on e5 and he can expand on the queenside. White has a hard time finding a good plan. Of course, White's two bishops and space count for something, but I think that Black has equalized here. 17 ♗e3 (17 e5 dxe5 18 f5 e4! 19 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♘f6 ∓ Hébert; 17 ♗d2 ♖c8) 17...♕a5 18 ♖ael ♖ac8 19 ♗g1 ♘e8 20 ♗c2 ♖b8 21 ♖e2 b5 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖fe1 c4 24 e5 dxe5 25 fxe5 b4 26 ♘d1 ♘c7 ∓ P.Schwarz-Pigusov, Biel 1989.

14...♗h3!

Or:

a) 14...♘e8 15 e5!? ♕e7 ± 16 ♖e1 ♗g4 17 exd6?? ♗d4+!.

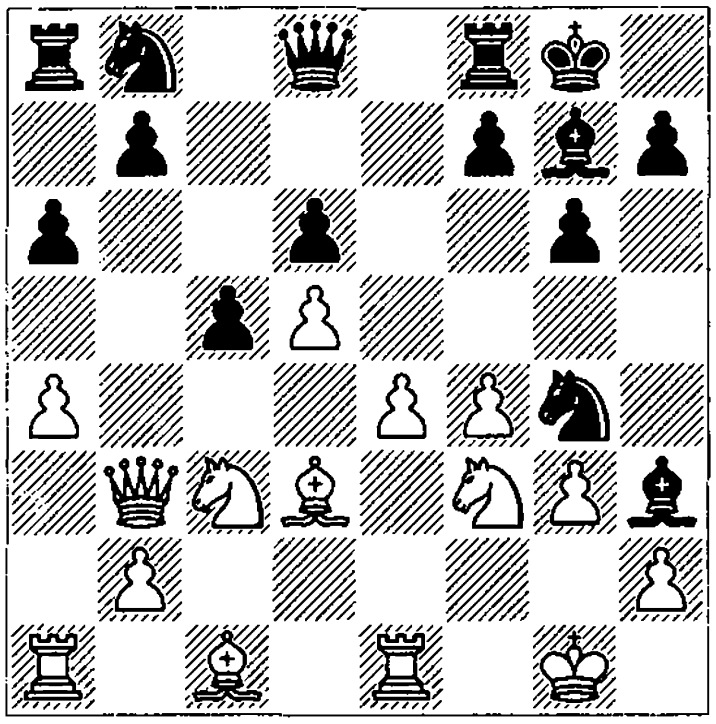
b) 14...♕e7 is not very attractive, but possible, intending 15 e5 ♘e8 or 15 ♖e1 ♘e8.

15 ♖e1 ♘g4! *(D)*

A truly incredible solution, leaving pawns and pieces hanging. Now:

a) Obviously not 16 ♘g5?? ♗d4+.

b) 16 ♕xb7 ♘d7 17 a5 (17 ♕c6 ♗d4+ 18 ♘xd4 cxd4 19 ♕xd6 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♖c8; for example, 21 ♗xa6 ♖xc3 22 ♕b4 {22 ♗b2 ♕a8! wins for Black} 22...♕f6 ∓ 23 ♗e2? ♖c4! 24 e5 ♘dxe5 –+) 17...♕e7 and then:



b1) 18 ♗xa6 ♖ab8 and now 19 ♕c7?? ♘de5! –+ was played in the exciting game Pigusov-Garcia Martinez, Moscow 1987. White's 19th was disastrous, but he would also have done badly after 19 ♕c6 ♖b4 20 ♗d3 (20 ♗e2? ♘b8 21 ♕a8 ♖xe4! 22 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 23 ♔h1 ♘f2+! 24 ♔g1 ♘d3 25 ♖a4 c4 –+; 20 ♖e2? ♘b8 21 ♕a8 ♘xa6 22 ♕xa6 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♖xe4 and wins) 20...♘b8 21 ♕a8 ♖b7 (21...♘d7 22 ♕c6 ♘b8 repeats, but Black is right to play for more than this) 22 ♘b5 ♕d7! and now 23 ♘g5?! ♖xb5 24 ♗xb5 (or else ...♖b7-a7) 24...♗d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 26 ♔g1 ♕xb5 ∓ or 23 a6 ♖xb5 24 a7! ♖b6 ∓ (or 24...♖b4 ∓); e.g., 25 axb8♕ ♖fxb8 26 ♕a2 ♖b3 27 ♖d1 c4!.

b2) Psakhis's suggested alternative 18 ♕b3 can be met by a plethora of tactics: 18...c4! 19 ♗xc4 (19 ♕xc4 ♘c5 and ...♕a7 next) 19...♘c5 20 ♕c2 ♖fc8 (20...♕a7!? 21 ♔h1 ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♘xe4! 23 ♘d4 ♖fe8 gives Black counterplay) 21 ♗f1 (21 ♖a2 ♕a7 22 ♔h1 ♘d3! 23 ♗xd3 ♘f2+ 24 ♔g1 ♘xd3+ 25 ♖e3 ♘b4 –+; 21 ♗d2?! ♕a7 ∓ 22 ♔h1 ♘d3! 23 ♗xd3 ♕f2 –+; 21 ♖a3 ♕a7 22 ♗e3 ♘xe3 23 ♖xe3 ♘b7!? 24 ♘d1 ♕c5 25 ♘f2! ♘xa5! ∓) 21...♕a7 22 ♔h1 ♗xf1 23 ♖xf1 ♖ab8; e.g., 24 ♘g5 ♘b3 25 ♖a3 ♘xc1 26 ♖xc1 ♕f2! ∓.

c) In *Informator*, Pigusov suggests 16 ♗f1 '±'. But this once again lands us in a swirl of complications (in which Black is at least holding his own) after 16...♗xf1:

c1) 17 ♔xf1 ♕c8 18 h3 ♘h2+! 19 ♔g2 ♘xf3 20 ♔xf3 ♕xh3 21 ♕xb7 ♘d7 22 ♗d2 g5! ∓.

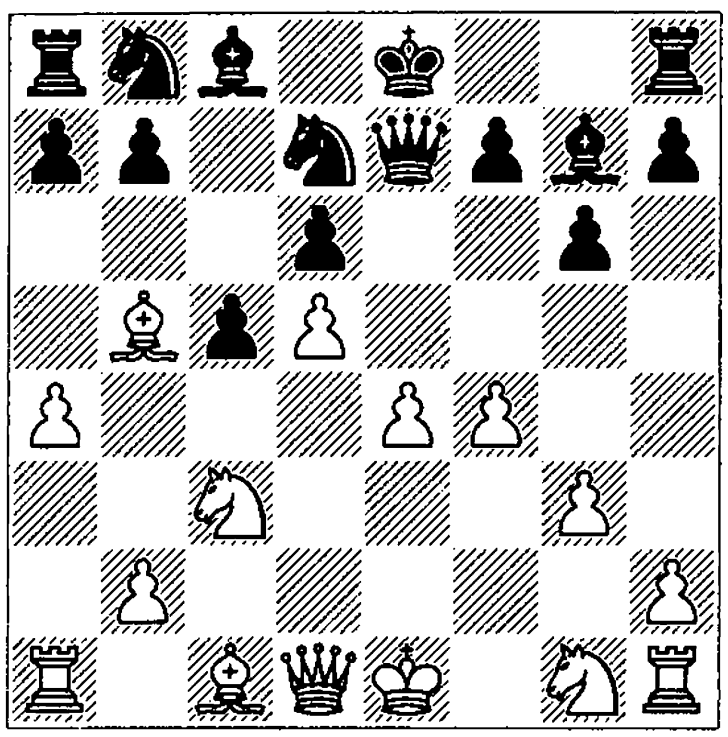
c2) 17 ♖xf1 ♕c8!? 18 h3 ♘f6 19 e5 ♘e8 =; e.g., 20 g4 ♘d7 21 e6c4 22 ♕c2 fxe6 23 dxe6 ♘c5 24 ♘d5 ♕xe6 25 ♕xc4 ♘c7! ∓.

c3) 17 ♕xb7 ♘d7 18 ♖xf1 ♖e8 (18...♗d4+ 19 ♘xd4 cxd4 20 ♘e2 ♖e8 {or 20...♕e7!? 21 ♘xd4 ♕xe4 =} 21 ♘xd4 ♘c5 22 ♕b4 ♖b8 23 ♕a3 ♘xe4 24 ♘c6 ♕b6+ 25 ♔g2 ♖bc8 with equal chances) 19 h3 ♗d4+ 20 ♔g2 (20 ♘xd4 cxd4 21 hxg4 ♘c5) 20...♘gf6 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 ∓.

I have annotated this game in detail to illustrate how dynamic and entertaining the play can be in the Benoni, especially when Black invests material for attack. The lesson, as so often, is that one must remain active in order to counteract and exploit White's greater control of terrain. This sort of game can teach you more about the Benoni than pages of listed variations might.

A342)

10...♕e7 *(D)*



When Black makes this critical decision, he is counting upon certain advantages that it has over 10...♕d8, i.e., more pressure on the e-pawn and piece development that clears the bank rank. On the negative side, the queen can't swing to squares like b6 and a5. In addition, if White plays e5 and this is met by ...dxe5, then d6 comes with tempo, and in those cases where White does not play d6, then White is helped by the fact that there is no direct attack on White's d5-pawn. The reality is that both moves are playable, and that each player will find different contexts in which one is to be preferred over the other. I should again remind the reader that by playing the 9...a6 move-order, one can play either move against a given bishop retreat.

11 ♘f3

Or:

a) 11 ♕e2?! 0-0 12 ♘f3 commits the queen to a square it may very well not want to go to. A nice example is 12...♖e8 13 ♗d3 ♘a6 14 0-0 ♘b4 15 ♖e1 ♘f6 16 ♔g2 ♗g4 17 h3 ♗xf3+ 18 ♔xf3 a6 19 g4?! h5! 20 g5? ♕d7! 21 ♕f1 (21 gxf6 ♕xh3+ 22 ♔f2 ♘xd3+; 21 ♔g2 ♘fxd5 ∓) 21...♘xd3 22 ♕xd3 ♕xh3+ 23 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 24 ♔d1 ♘g4 25 ♕d2 ♘f2+ 26 ♔c2 ♗xc3 with ...♖e4 to come, O.Garcia-Hamdouchi, Sitges 1994.

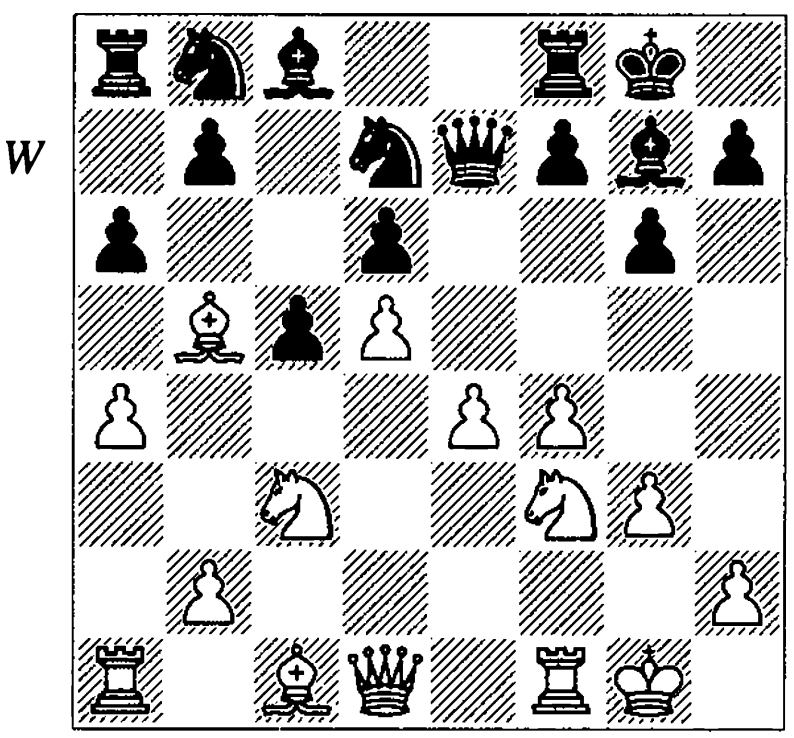
b) 11 ♕f3 ♘a6 12 ♘ge2 ♘b4 13 0-0 0-0 14 g4 and now Black can play 14...♘c2 ∓ with ...♘d4 next, as in Hort-Hulak, Surakarta 1982. Kapengut gives 14...a6 15 ♗c4 ♘b6 16 b3 ♘c2 17 ♖a2 ♘d4 18 ♕g2 and now 18...f5 'unclear', but instead 18...♘xc4 19 bxc4 ♘xe2+! 20 ♘xe2 ♖e8 is awful for White.

11...0-0

11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕xe4+ 13 ♔f2 0-0 has also been played, with the usual risks. When the queen (instead of a rook) has to capture on e4 and there is no gain of tempo on a bishop at c4, those risks are greater.

12 0-0 a6 *(D)*

With this particular move-order, 12...♘a6 with the idea ...♘b4 is also possible, but as explained in the last section, ...a6 may already have been played.



Now we have the same split that we saw after 10...♕d8, i.e.:

A3421: 13 ♗c4 103
A3422: 13 ♗e2 103
A3423: 13 ♗d3 105

A3421)

13 ♗c4

This is probably the easiest move to meet, although I lack examples.

13...♘b6 14 ♗a2

14 ♗e2 is met by 14...♗g4 15 a5 ♘c8. Compare Line A3411 (the analogous line with 10...♕d8); Black is better off with his queen developed.

14...♗g4 15 a5

Instead, 15 e5 dxe5 16 d6 ♕d8 17 fxe5 ♗xe5 doesn't do much for White. Nor does 15 ♕b3!? ♗xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♘c8 17 ♗d2 ♘d7! 18 ♕xb7? (18 ♔g2 ♖b8 =) 18...♘e5! and Black has a clear advantage.

15...♘c8 16 ♖e1

After 16 ♕d3 ♗xf3!? 17 ♕xf3 ♘d7, the traditional pawn sacrifice 18 e5?! dxe5 19 f5 fails to 19...♘d6, which is generally the case with a knight on c8.

Now (after 16 ♖e1) a plausible follow-up would be 16...♘d7 17 h3 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♖b8 (18...♕d8!?) 19 ♗b3 (19 e5 dxe5 20 f5 ♘d6; 19 ♗c4 ♖e8) 19...♖e8 20 ♗d2 b5 21 axb6 ♖xb6 =.

A3422)

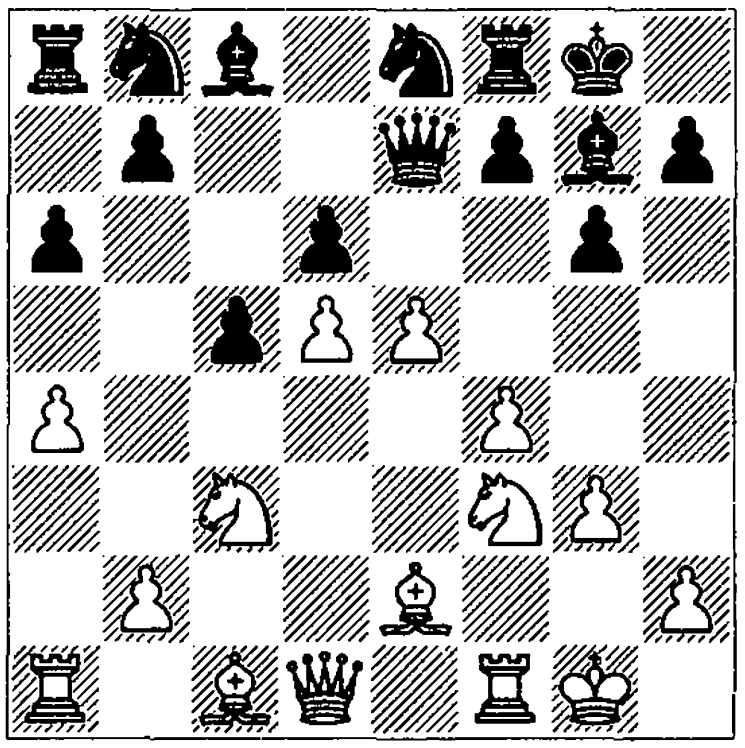
13 ♗e2

This is a complicated line. White lends less support to e4 and blocks the e-file, but he anticipates ...♗g4 and keeps d5 protected. As we shall see, this makes it easier to play e5.

13...♘f6

13...♖e8!? is quite interesting; for example, 14 ♔g2 (14 ♖e1 ♘f8 intending ...♗g4 and ...♘bd7 is unclear) 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♕xe4 16 ♖e1 can be met by 16...♕f5 or 16...♘f6 17 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 18 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 19 c4 ♘b4 20 ♗b2 ♗h3+ 21 ♔g1 ♗g4 with promising compensation.

14 e5 ♘e8 *(D)*



This is critical for the ...♕e7 blocking strategy. Black hopes to destroy the centre by ...♗g4 and ...♘d7, but White has the dangerous e5-e6 idea, which wasn't available in most lines after ...♕d8 because White's d-pawn was loose.

15 e6

This is the most intimidating move. Other ideas:

a) 15 ♖e1 ♗g4 (the most ambitious; after 15...♘d7, 16 exd6!? ♕d8! 17 a5 ♘xd6 was roughly equal in Grabuzova-Balashov, Moscow 1996, but 16 e6 is probably more important) 16 e6 (16 ♗c4 transposes to line 'b') 16...fxe6 (I think this must be better

than 16...♗xf3, as played previously) and now:

a1) 17 dxe6 ♘c7! 18 ♗c4 ♘c6 ∓ intending ...♘d4.

a2) 17 ♘g5! ♗xe2 18 ♕xe2 (18 ♖xe2 ♗d4+ 19 ♗e3 e5) 18...♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 (19 ♗e3 e5 20 ♘e6 ♗xe3+ 21 ♕xe3 ♖f5!) 19...e5 20 ♘e6 ♖f7 21 ♘g5 ♖f8 22 ♘e6 ♖f7 = 23 ♘e4!? ♘g7 24 ♘4g5 ♘xe6 and now 25 ♘xf7? ♕xf7 26 dxe6 ♕xe6 gives Black the advantage.

b) 15 ♗c4 ♗g4 16 ♖e1 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♘d7 and White's centre is vulnerable: 19 ♗f4 (19 d6 ♘xd6!; 19 e6 ♘e5 20 ♕e2 ♘d6 ∓) 19...♘xe5 20 ♕e2 ♘d6 21 ♗xa6 ♖fe8! ∓.

15...fxe6 16 ♗c4

16 ♖e1 is met by 16...♘c7.

16...♘c7

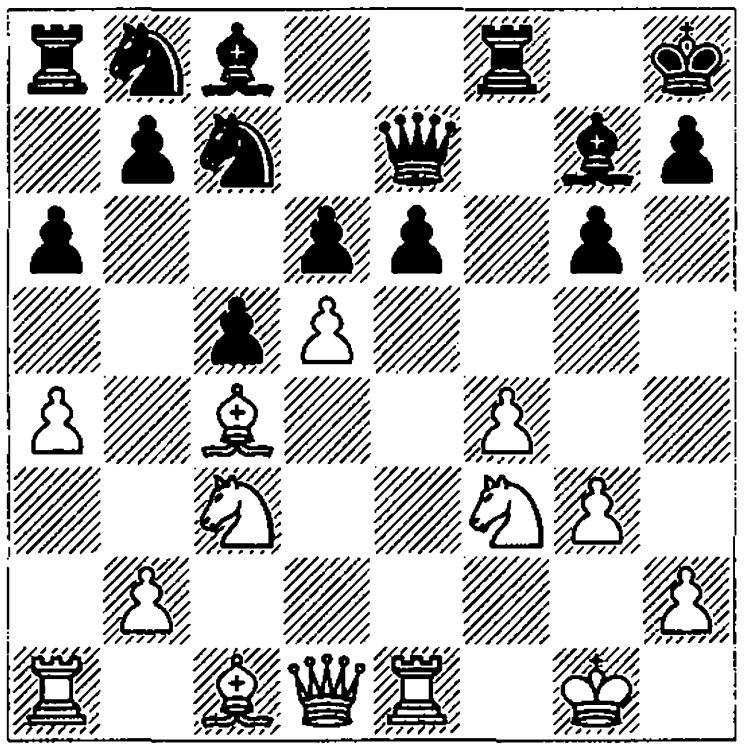
16...♔h8!? is another way to play it, intending 17 ♖e1 (17 dxe6 ♘c7) 17...e5 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♗g5 ♕c7 with the ideas ...♗g4 and ...♘d6.

17 ♖e1

Here we see one advantage of 10...♕e7 over 10...♕d8 in this kind of position: the e-pawn is blocked, so Black has some time to organize his minor pieces. In Petursson-J.Fries Nielsen, Næstved 1988, Black now played the rather panicky 17...b5?!, giving back the pawn without fully releasing the pressure. It seems to me that Black should first get his king out of the way by...

17...♔h8!? *(D)*

This helps the idea of ...e5 in several positions (and avoids nasty shots like f5, meeting ...♖xf5 with ♗g5!).



The position defies complete analysis, but here are some ideas:

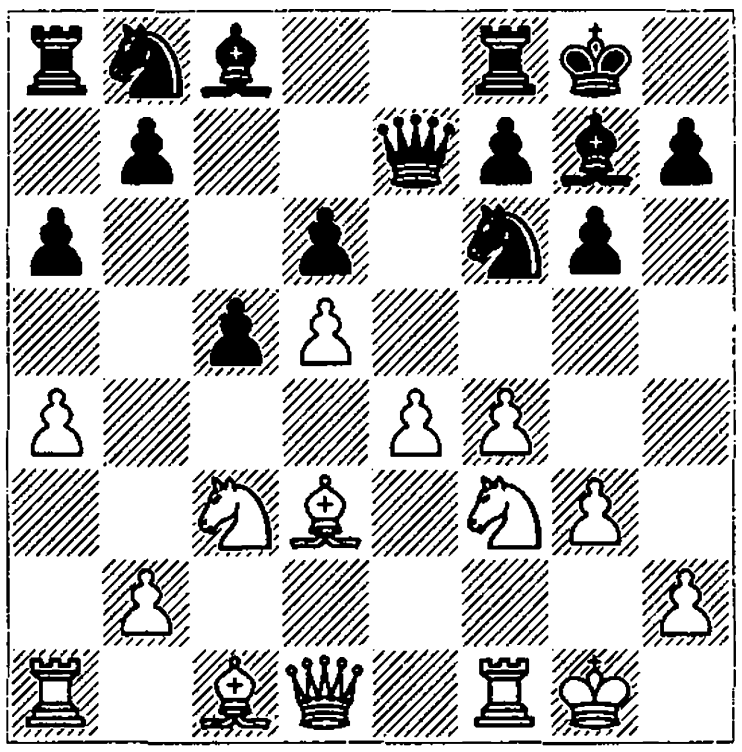
a) 18 dxe6 ♘c6 19 ♘d5 (19 ♘g5 ♘d4 {there are alternatives here} 20 ♘f7+ ♖xf7! 21 exf7 ♘f3+ 22 ♕xf3 ♕xe1+ 23 ♔g2 ♗e6 24 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 25 ♕xb7 ♕xf7 =) 19...♘xd5 20 ♕xd5 (20 ♗xd5 ♘b4 21 ♗b3 d5! 22 ♘g5 c4) 20...♖f5 (20...♘b4 21 ♕e4 b5! is interesting; e.g., 22 ♕xa8 bxc4 23 f5 ♗b7 24 ♕a7 ♖xf5 25 ♗g5 ♘c6 26 ♕b6 ♖xg5 27 ♘xg5 ♗d4+ 28 ♔g2 ♕xg5 29 ♕xb7 ♕d5+ 30 ♔h3 ♕h5+ =) 21 ♕e4 ♘b4 22 ♘h4 (22 g4 d5 23 ♕e2 ♖f6 −+) 22...d5! 23 ♘xf5 gxf5 24 ♕xf5 dxc4 and Black's material may well outweigh White's bind.

b) 18 ♗e3 exd5 (18...♘d7 19 dxe6 ♘b6 is unclear) 19 ♘xd5 (19 ♗xc5 ♕d7 −+) 19...♘xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♕c7 21 ♘g5 ♘c6! 22 ♘f7+ ♕xf7 23 ♕xf7 ♖xf7 24 ♗xf7 ♗xb2 25 ♖ab1 ♗c3 26 ♖edl ♘d4 =. Black has the bishop-pair, a pawn and activity for the exchange.

c) 18 ♘g5 e5!? (the alternative 18...♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 e5 is worth considering) 19 fxe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗f4 ♘d7 21

♘f3! (21 ♘e6 ♘xe6 22 dxe6 ♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 ♘e5 ∓) 21...♘e8!? 22 ♕e2 b6 (22...♔g7!?) 23 ♗h6 (23 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 24 ♗xe5+ dxe5 25 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♘d6 =) 23...♖f7 (23...♖f5!? 24 ♗d3 ♖h5) 24 ♘g5 ♖f5 25 ♘e6 ♘df6 with the point that 26 g4 is met by 26...♗xe6!.

Black has to defend carefully here. With best play for both sides, I think one arrives at a kind of dynamic equality in which, as we have just seen, it is as easy for White to go wrong as it is for Black. Still, it has to be admitted that such a perilous course will not appeal to everyone. Less adventurous players may prefer 13...♖e8, or else to look into the lines with ...♕d8.



A3423)

13 ♗d3 ♘f6 *(D)*

Other ideas seem to commit Black to the ...♘f8 retreat:

a) 13...b6!? 14 ♖e1 ♖e8 15 ♕c2 ♖a7 16 b3 ♘f8 17 ♗b2 ♗g4 was about equal in Vrbata-Pekarek, Czech Cht 1995/6. Of course, White has many alternatives.

b) 13...♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♘f8 with the same idea of ...♗g4 is solid, but this is also cramped.

14 ♔g2

Preparing to meet ...♗g4 with h3. As usual, White has some critical alternatives here:

a) 14 ♖e1 ♗g4 15 ♗f1 ♘bd7 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘e8 resembles the ...♗g4 line against the Four Pawns Attack: 18 ♗e3 ♕d8 (to head to the queenside, as in a 10...♕d8 variation) 19 g4 ♖b8 (perhaps 19...♕a5; for example, 20 ♗f2 ♖b8 21 ♗g2 c4 22 ♖ed1 ♘c5 =) 20 ♗f2 ♘c7 21 ♗g3 ♖e8 22 ♖e2 (22 a5 b5 23 axb6 ♖xb6 24 ♖a2 ♕b8 25 ♖e2 ♖b3! =) 22...b5 23 ♖ae1, Fronczek-Namgilov, Katowice 1991. Now the standard line-opening idea 23...bxa4! looks effective: 24 e5 (24 ♘xa4 ♘b5 threatens ...♘d4) 24...♘b5 25 ♘xb5!? axb5 26 e6 ♗d4+ 27 ♔h1 fxe6 28 dxe6 ♘f6 29 f5 gxf5 30 gxf5 ♔h8 with ongoing complications that are difficult to assess.

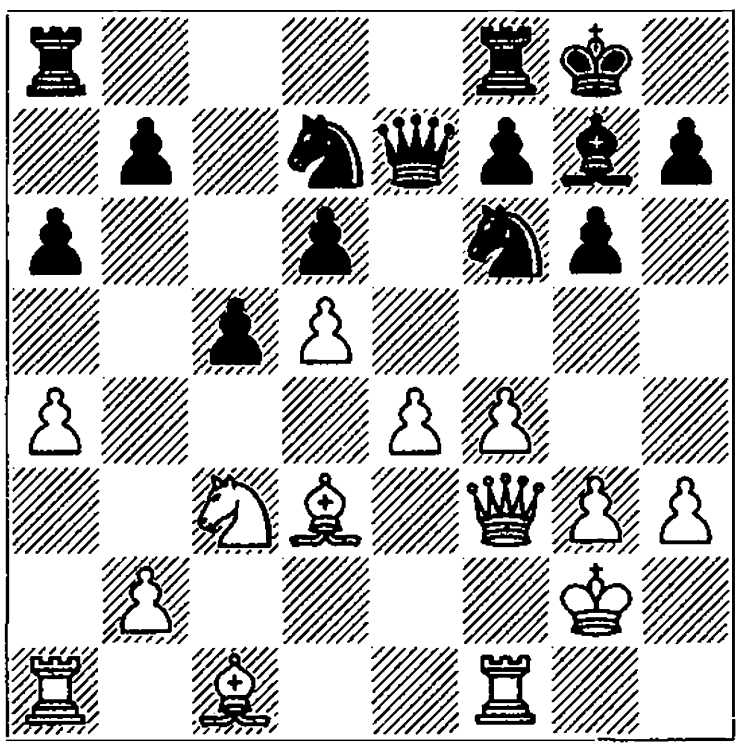
b) 14 e5 ♘e8 (14...♘fd7!?) 15 exd6 (after 15 ♖e1 ♗g4, 16 e6 fxe6 17 dxe6 ♘c7 18 ♗c4 transposes to note 'a1' to White's 15th move in Line A3422, while 16 ♗c4 is line 'b' of that note) 15...♘xd6 16 ♖e1 ♕c7 17 ♘e5 ♘d7 18 ♘c4 ♘f6 19 ♕b3 ♘xc4 20 ♕xc4 ♗h3! 21 ♗e3 ♖ac8 22 ♖ad1 ♘g4 =.

c) Kapengut likes 14 ♕b3, which unpins White's f3-knight, but doesn't threaten b7 and therefore compares rather poorly with 14 ♕b3 in Line A3413. Black should play 14...♗h3, leading to:

c1) 15 ♖f2 ♘g4 16 ♖e2 ♘d7 17 ♕xb7 ♖fb8 18 ♕c7 ♖c8 19 ♕a5 c4 20 ♗c2 ♘de5 (20...♘c5!? may be better) 21 fxe5 ♕a7+ 22 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 23 ♔g1 =.

c2) 15 ♖e1 ♘g4 (anyway!) 16 e5 (16 ♗d2 can be met by 16...♘d7, hoping for 17 ♕xb7?? ♘de5!) 16...dxe5 17 ♘g5 c4! 18 ♕xc4 (18 ♗xc4? ♕c5+) 18...b5 19 ♕e4 ♕a7+ 20 ♗e3 ♘xe3 21 ♕xe3 ♕xe3+ 22 ♖xe3 exf4 23 ♖f3 b4 and Black stands better.

14...♗g4 15 h3 ♗xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 *(D)*



A familiar type of situation, discussed at length in Line A33 (note to Black's 15th move). White is a long way from a breakthrough, and one question is whether Black's queenside play will be well underway by the time his opponent works up real threats.

17 g4

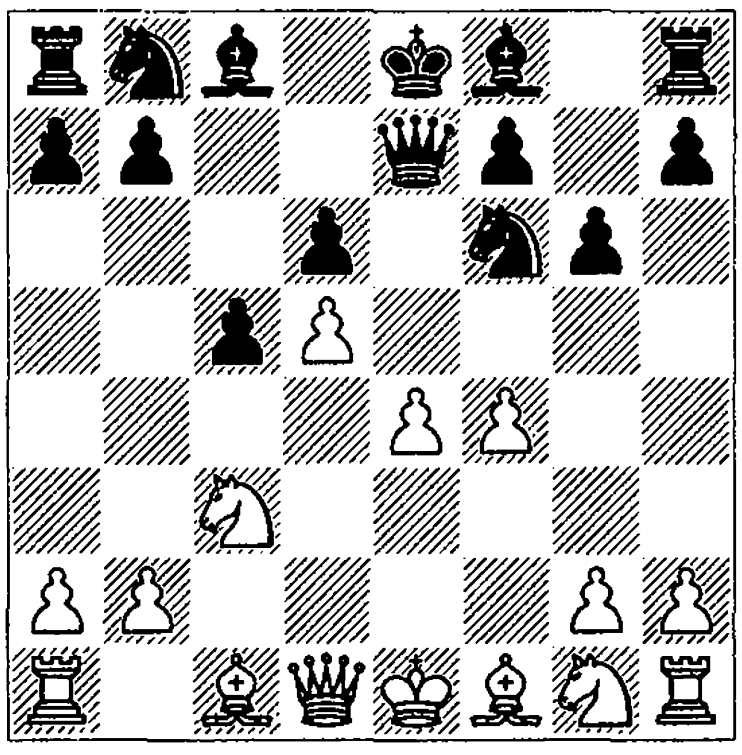
17 ♗d2 is a solid move, but hasn't established any advantage in two tries, which strengthens one's belief in Black's set-up: 17...♖fc8 (Black was able to cope with top opposition even after the less logical 17...♖ac8?!: 18 b3 ♘e8 19 ♖ac1 ♘c7 20 a5 ♖b8 21 ♖fe1 b5 22 b4!?, Yusupov-Villwock, Essen 2000; this is probably about equal, but Black got lucky in an inferior endgame and actually won) 18 ♖ae1 c4 19 ♗b1 ♘e8 20 g4 b5! with timely counterplay, Sergienko-Sziebert, Budapest 1993.

The text-move (17 g4) is Kreuzer-Aulinger, Germany tt 1996/7, which continued 17...♖fe8!? 18 g5 ♘h5 19 ♗d2 ♖ab8, which appears somewhat in White's favour. However, I don't see anything wrong with either 17...h6, with the idea 18 h4 h5! 19 g5 ♘g4 20 f5 ♗d4 =, or 17...♖fc8 18 g5 ♘e8.

Overall, I tend to like 10...♕d8 in more situations than 10...♕e7, as it avoids some of these scary e5 lines; but sometimes the latter move is useful, and by choosing 9...a6, one can play either according to one's taste.

B)

7...♕e7!? *(D)*



An eccentric idea which avoids all of the sections above by deviating at

the earliest possible point. The main incentive for playing this way would be to avoid the Taimanov Attack.

8 ♘f3

Direct and probably best, since 8...♘xe4?? now fails to 9 ♕a4+. Other moves have been tried:

a) 8 ♗d3 ♗g7 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗g4 transposes to note 'b' to White's 9th move.

b) 8 ♕c2 ♗g7 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 ♘f3, Watarai-Taleb, Asian Cht 1987, and now 10...♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 ♗f5 is strong: 12 ♘fg5 ♖e8 13 ♗f3 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 h6 (14...f5 15 ♘e6 fxe4 16 0-0 ♘c6!) 15 ♘e6! ♘c6!? (15...fxe6) 16 0-0 (16 ♕e2 ♘d4 17 ♘xd4 ♕xe4) 16...♘d4 ∓.

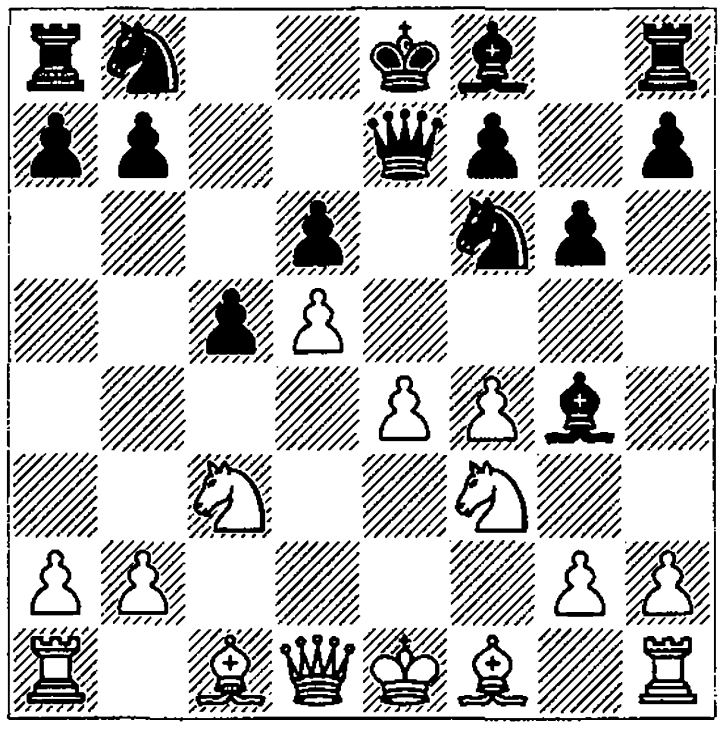
c) 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7!? (8...♘bd7 looks safer) 9 ♗d3 (Hébert suggests 9 ♕e2, with the point 9...♗g7 10 e5!, but 9...♗xb5! 10 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 improves) and now:

c1) 9...a6?! 10 ♘f3! (Larin-Kapustin, Moscow 1997 went 10 a4!? ♗g7 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 ♗g4 with easy equality) 10...♗g4 (10...b5 11 e5 b4 12 ♘e2 ♘xd5 13 ♗e4) 11 0-0 ♗g7 (11...♘bd7 12 ♕a4!? ♗xf3 13 ♖xf3 ♗g7 14 e5!) 12 e5 ♘fd7 13 e6! fxe6 14 dxe6 ♗xe6 15 ♖e1 with a terrific attack.

c2) Better is 9...♗g7 10 ♕b3!? b5!, a sacrifice resembling other lines in this book. Play might go 11 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 12 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 13 ♘f3 ♘xe4!? 14 0-0 f5 with chances for both sides, and very hard to assess. Still, I feel this should be fine for Black.

8...♗g4 *(D)*

8...♘bd7? is a known error because 9 e5! dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♗b5+! is extremely strong; e.g., 11...♘ed7+ 12 ♔f2! ♘g4+ 13 ♔g3 +–.



9 h3

Or:

a) After 9 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 10 0-0, I like 10...0-0-0!?, partly because you don't often get to castle queenside in the Modern Benoni! For example, 11 ♕a4 (11 ♖e1 ♗g7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xd1 16 ♘xf7 ♗c2 ∓) 11...♔b8 12 e5 ♘e8 =. Nevertheless, 10...a6 may not be so bad, since 11 e5, as in A.Davie-Aitken, British Ch (Hastings) 1965, can be met by 11...axb5! 12 exf6 (12 ♘xb5 ♔d8) 12...♕xf6 with the idea 13 ♘xb5 ♔d8.

b) 9 ♗d3 is a natural continuation: 9...♗g7 10 0-0 (after 10 e5, 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♘bd7!? looks adequate; e.g., 13 0-0 ♘xe5 14 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 15 ♕g3 0-0 16 ♗f4 ♖fe8 17 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 18 ♖ad1 a6 19 d6 ♕f8 20 ♗f1 ♘c6 ∓) 10...0-0 and now:

b1) 11 e5 ♘e8!? 12 ♖e1 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗f4 ♘d7! 16 ♖ad1 (16 ♗b5 ♘d6 17 ♗xd7 ♗d4+) 16...♘d6!.

b2) 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 13 ♖e1 (13 e5 dxe5 14 f5 e4!) 13...a6 (13...♘e8!?; 13...♖ab8!?) 14 a4 ♘e8 15 ♗e3 (15 ♗d2 ♘c7 16 a5 ♖ab8 17 ♖a2 b5! 18 axb6 ♖xb6 =) 15...♘c7 16 ♖ad1 b5! 17 axb5 ♘xb5 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♗xb5 ♖fb8! 20 ♕e2 ♖a5 =. Admittedly, Black is walking a tightrope in such lines, but that doesn't mean that they're bad for him!

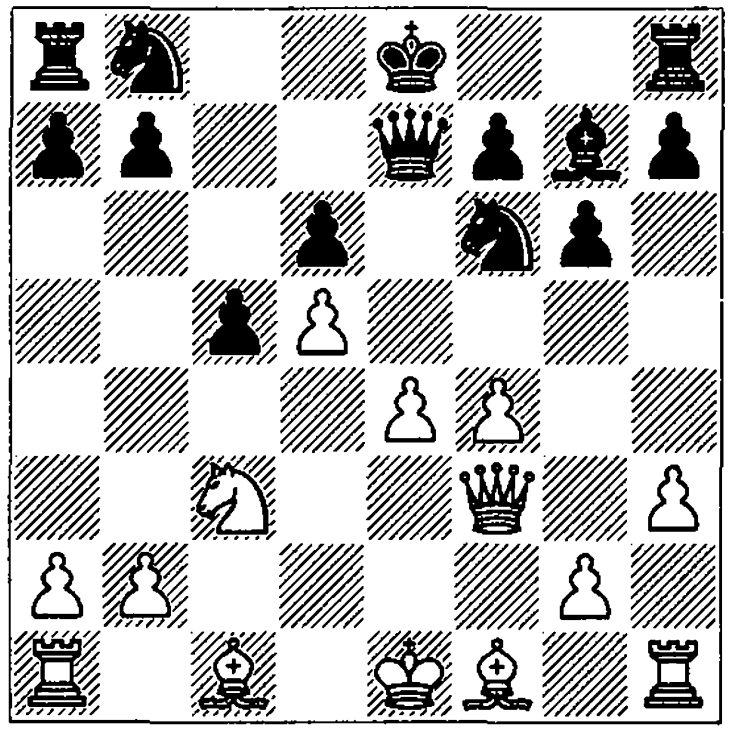
c) 9 ♗e2 ♘bd7 and now:

c1) 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♗g7 12 0-0 0-0 (this closely resembles the 9...♗g4 variation of the Four Pawns Attack) 13 ♖e1 ♖fe8 14 ♘b5!? ♘b6 15 e5 dxe5 16 d6 ♕d7! 17 ♘c7 e4 18 ♗e2 ♖ed8 (18...♖ad8 19 ♗b5) 19 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 with compensation; for example: 20 ♗e3 ♘fd5 21 ♗xc5 ♗xb2 22 ♖b1 ♘c3 23 ♕c2 ♘xb1 24 ♖xb1 (24 ♕xb2 ♘a4 ∓) 24...♗g7 25 ♕xe4 ♘a4 =.

c2) 10 0-0 ♗xf3 (10...♘xe4!? is a little unlikely, but may be worth a look: 11 ♘xe4 {11 ♖e1 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 0-0-0 is unclear} 11...♕xe4 12 ♖e1 ♗e7 13 ♘g5 ♗xe2 14 ♖xe2 ♕d4+ 15 ♗e3 ♕xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 0-0) 11 ♗xf3 0-0-0 12 ♖e1 (12 ♕a4 a6; 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♘b5 a6 14 d6 ♕e6 ∓, intending to meet 15 fxe5 with 15...axb5 16 exf6 ♘e5) 12...a6 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♔h1 ♗g7 16 ♗f4 ♘fd7 17 ♖c1 ♖he8 – unclear?!

d) 9 e5, as always, is a critical challenge: 9...dxe5 10 fxe5 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 (11 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 12 ♕xf3 ♕xe5+ 13 ♔f1 {13 ♔f2 ♕d4+} and now either 13...0-0-0!? or 13...♗d6 14 ♗h6 ♔d8) 11...♕xe5+ (11...♘bd7!?) 12 ♗e2 ♗d6 13 ♗h6 (13 g3 0-0 14 ♗f4 ♕e7 15 ♗g5 ♘bd7 16 0-0 ♔g7 17 ♖ae1 ♗e5) 13...♘bd7 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 15 ♘b5 ♗b8 16 g3 ♖he8 17 ♖he1 ♕e4 ∓. This is a little scary! Fortunately, Black isn't the only one who is at risk here.

9...♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 ♗g7 *(D)*



We have a unique kind of Four Pawns Attack that doesn't arise by any normal KID move-order. I didn't like this kind of set-up at all when I first wrote about the Taimanov Attack. But now that I see its similarities with the ...♗g4 line versus the Four Pawns Attack (A21), I am encouraged. In comparison with that line, Black's rooks are quickly connected, and a timely ...♘e8 can be handy.

11 ♗d3

11 ♗c4?! ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 f5 13 ♗d3 0-0 gives Black at least equality.

11...0-0 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♗d2

The other bishop move also makes sense: 13 ♗e3 a6 14 a4 ♖fc8 (after 14...♖ab8, Black can be happy with 15 e5? dxe5 16 f5 e4 17 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♖fe8 20 ♘xc5 ♖xe3 21 ♘xd7 ♖d8 ∓ with the idea 22

♘b6 ♗d4; however, 15 ♗f2! is hard to meet) 15 ♖fe1 ♖ab8 16 ♗f2 ♘e8 with a typical position from the ...♗g4 Four Pawns Attack. Black aims for his customary ...♘c7 and ...b5, even if the opponent chooses to play a5. White is probably somewhat better, but he has some trouble finding a coherent plan.

13...a6

13...♘e8 14 ♖fe1 ♘c7 (14...a6) 15 ♔h1 ♕h4? (15...♖ab8!) 16 ♖e2 ♖ae8 17 ♗e1 ♕d8 18 ♗g3! gave White a nice advantage in Panno-Aitken, Munich OL 1958.

14 a4 ♖ab8 15 ♗e1

Or 15 ♖fe1 ♘e8 16 a5 (16 ♗c4 ♘c7) 16...♘c7 (16...b5!?) 17 e5 dxe5 18 f5 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 =.

15...♘e8 16 ♗g3 ♘c7

Yet again Black poses the kind of problem given in the note to White's 13th move. Play might continue 17 e5 (17 ♖ad1 b5 18 axb5 ♘xb5 =) 17...dxe5 18 f5 c4 19 ♗e4 and now 19...♕d6 is equal. Less clear but worth considering is 19...b5!? 20 axb5 ♘xb5 21 ♖xa6 ♘d4.

Naturally, the above analysis only scratches the surface. It's hard for me to believe that 7...♕e7 is fully equal against perfect play, but it seems close, and offers good practical chances. Such an unknown line also has considerable surprise value. The drawback is that Black risks being overrun by a violent tactical onslaught, but I haven't found anything so dire. I think that 7...♕e7 will probably appeal most to those who fear the Taimanov Attack.

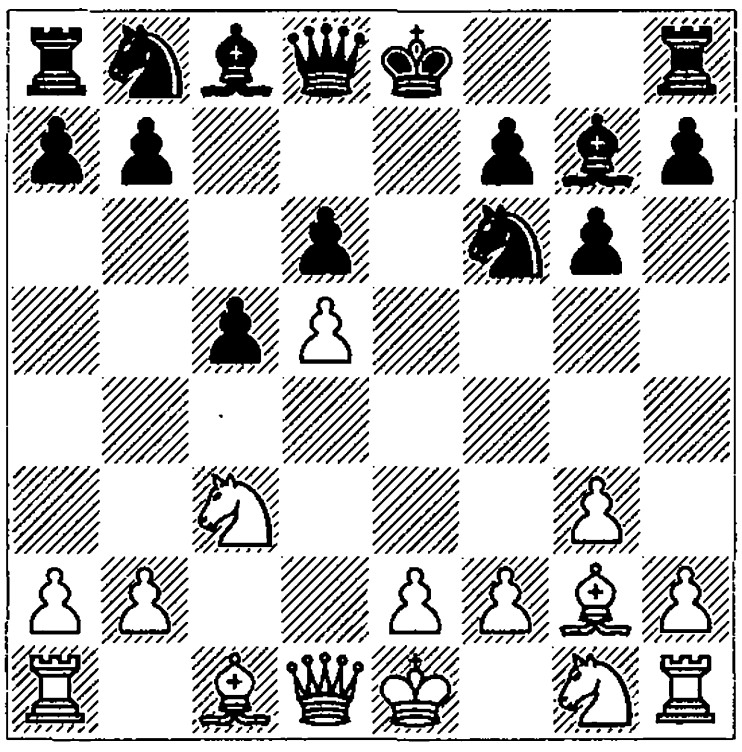
Of the f4 systems in this chapter, the least effective is the Mikenas Attack, which allows for multiple solutions and is not truly dangerous. Since the Four Pawns Attack is fundamentally a King's Indian Defence, I have suggested two less analysed responses, and I regard 9 ♗e2 ♘bd7 (Line A22) as a particularly exciting and promising line.

In the important Taimanov System, my proposed solutions obviously cover a lot of new ground. Many of the critical continuations rest mainly upon analysis, and the play tends to be too chaotic to yield definitive conclusions. Some players may be disturbed by this, as well as by the undeniable danger to which Black is exposed. In response, I should first point out that a degree of risk goes with the territory, i.e., when one plays the 'pure' Benoni (without ♘f3 in), one must be particularly willing to enter into unruly complications. Indeed, Benoni players tend to revel in a bit of chaos. Remember that White is similarly subject to danger and uncertainty. It is also important to realize that there is plenty of room for creativity in this relatively unexplored territory. One certainly needn't follow my analysis inflexibly, and I have also left numerous alternatives for Black unanalysed, such as ideas with ...♘a6 and ...♘b4. My general conclusion is that one can have a lot of fun with the lines in this chapter and that they will lead to positions rich in possibilities.

6 Fianchetto Systems with g3

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3

6 g3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 *(D)* normally ends up transposing to our main line, though there are a few independent paths:



a) White can try 8 ♘h3, but if ♘f4 follows, it obstructs his pieces: 8...0-0 9 0-0 b6 (or 9...a6 10 a4 ♗xh3!? 11 ♗xh3 ♘bd7 12 ♗f4 ♕c7 13 ♖c1 ♖ae8 14 ♗g2 ♘e5 = Vadasz-Varga, Budapest 1998) 10 ♘f4 a6 11 a4 ♖e8 12 h3 ♖a7! 13 e4 ♖ae7 = Moeller-Baklund, Moscow 1956.

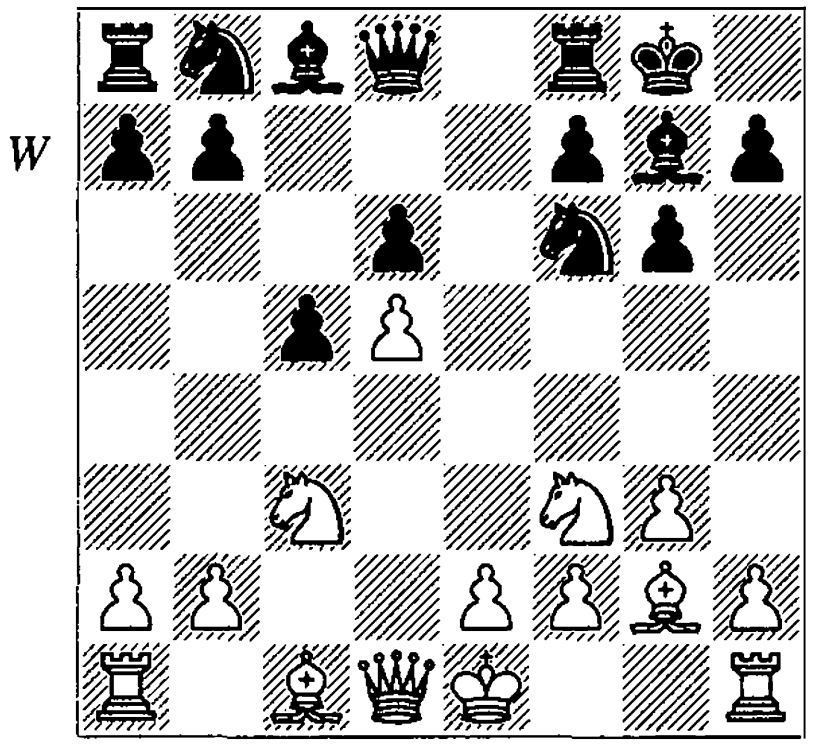
b) The idea 8 e4 0-0 9 ♘ge2 fails to control the e5-square and forfeits the idea of placing a knight on c4. Black has several good answers, of which lines 'b2' and 'b3' are best, in my opinion:

b1) 9...♘a6 10 0-0 ♘c7 11 a4 a6 12 a5 ♖e8 13 f3 ♘b5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 = (Kapengut).

b2) 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 a5 b5! (12...♖e8 =) 13 axb6 ♕xb6! (since ♘c4 isn't available) 14 h3 and now 14...♖e8 = Novotelnov-Plater, Moscow 1947, or 14...♘e8 with the idea ...♘c7-b5-d4 – Kapengut.

b3) 9...♖e8 10 0-0 (10 a4 ♘a6! 11 0-0 ♘b4 12 h3 b6 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♗a6 = Tanin-Aratovsky, corr. 1954) 10...b5! 11 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♘ec3 ♖e8 14 ♗f4 ♗f8 = Murei-Quinteros, New York 1983.

6...g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 *(D)*



9 0-0

This is the basic position of the Fianchetto System, a very solid approach which at first glance uses two

tempi to put the king's bishop on a bad diagonal (blocked by the d5-pawn), and doesn't even begin to expand in the centre. Yet this is a popular choice of strong positional players, because it covers e4, protects the king, and allows a sort of Knight's Tour by ♘d2-c4. Often, when Black turns his attention to challenging that knight, White can play moves like ♖e1 and ♗f4 followed by e4-e5, which incidentally can bring the g2-bishop to life.

White's strategy is primarily preventative: he advances few pawns and denies Black an easy target. Key central squares are to be guarded so as to hinder any freeing moves, and even manoeuvres such as ...♘g4-e5 are often discouraged by h3.

Since Black lacks space, his inability to grapple directly with the enemy can be irritating for him. But the very nature of White's scheme also gives Black more leeway, because his own position is under no attack. White tends to have his pieces on the first and second ranks (e.g., rooks on e1 and a1, bishops on c1 and g2, knights on c3 and d2, queen on c2). This means that Black can organize his troops into whatever formation he pleases, since he is under little obligation to defend the usual sore spots on d6 and e5. And fortunately for him, he still has one plan that can't be prevented forever, i.e., the customary advance of his queenside majority. To the extent that White must divert his forces to keep the queenside pawns in check, Black is given greater freedom to manoeuvre in the centre.

There are fewer issues of move-order in this chapter than in any other. Instead of 9 0-0, the only non-transpositional sequence that I'm aware of is the immediate 9 ♘d2 a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘c4 (11 0-0 ♖e8 transposes to Line A) 11...♘b6 12 ♘a3 ♗d7, which can lead to:

a) 13 ♗d2 ♘xa4! 14 ♘xa4 b5 15 ♘c3 (15 ♘xc5 dxc5 16 d6 {16 0-0 ♖e8} 16...♖c8; 15 ♗f4 bxa4 16 ♗xd6 ♖e8) 15...b4 16 ♘c4 bxc3 17 bxc3 ♕e7 18 ♘b6 ♖a7 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 0-0 ♖b8 = Krasenkov-Tolnai, Budapest 1989.

b) After 13 0-0, 13...♖e8 transposes to Line A; if Black wants to avoid those lines, he can also try 13...♖b8 14 a5 ♘c8 15 ♘c4 and, for example, 15...♘e8 (15...♖e8 again transposes to Line A) 16 ♗f4 g5! (16...f5 17 ♕d2 ♗b5 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♘a3 ♘c7 =) 17 ♗d2 f5 18 ♕c1 h6 19 h4 ♗f6 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 f4 g4 22 b3 ♕e7 ∓.

c) 13 a5 ♘c8 14 ♘c4 ♘g4 15 ♗f4 ♗b5!? 16 ♕b3 ♗xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♘e5 (17...b5!? 18 axb6 ♘xb6) 18 ♕a2 b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 0-0 ♕e7 (20...♖e8) 21 b3 ♖fb8!? (21...♘d3!? 22 exd3 ♗xc3 23 ♖ac1 ♗b4 is unclear) 22 ♕c2, Krasenkov-Petran, Balatonberény 1988, and now simply 22...a5 with the idea of ...c4 keeps Black active, although his earlier options achieve equality more easily.

All these examples bear close resemblance to the main lines below.

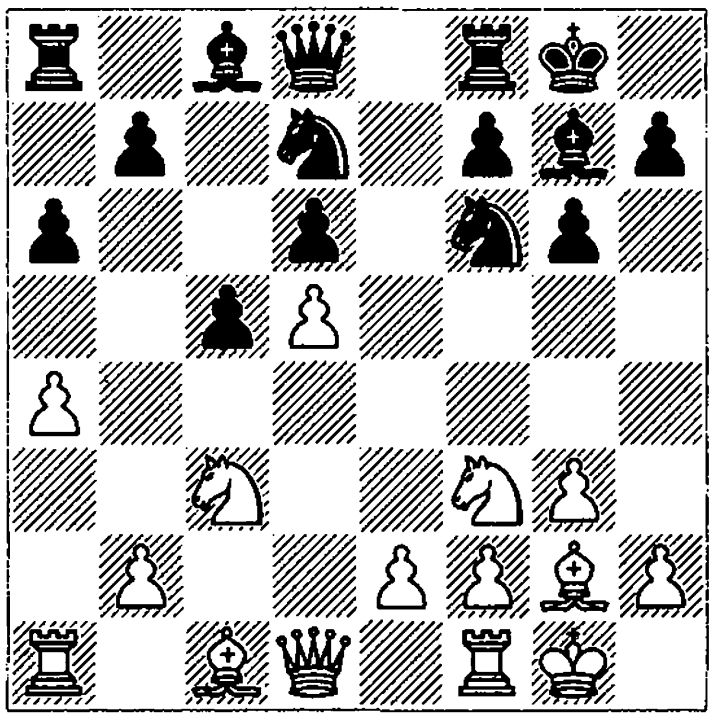
After the text-move (9 0-0), play divides into:

A: 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 112
B: Lines with ...♖e8 124

The first approach is a positional one, calmly preparing the eventual queenside attack, although when the goals of the two sides conflict, the usual Benoni fireworks can erupt. The second strategy is impatient and tactical. Black will enforce moves like ...♘e4 before White has had a chance to organize his preventative formation.

A)

9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 *(D)*



This is the most-played line of the g3 fianchetto system. White has these main moves:

A1: 11 e4 113
A2: 11 ♗f4 114
A3: 11 ♘d2 115

The last is the most important. But many top players choose 11 ♗f4 to avoid the complexity and depth of theory on 11 ♘d2, so that will also be studied in detail.

Note that 11 e4 cannot arise from the 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 move-order, but in that case 11 ♘d2 sometimes transposes, as explained in the relevant section (Line B2).

Also played are:

a) 11 a5 ♖e8 (11...b5 12 axb6 ♘xb6 13 e4 ♖e8 14 ♖e1, Pons-Gil Reguera, Madrid 1992, and now 14...h6!? 15 ♕c2 ♖a7!? 16 ♖d1 ♖ae7 17 ♘d2 ♘g4 is double-edged) 12 ♗f4 ♕c7 13 ♘a4 b5! 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 16 ♘d2 was given as ± by Marin, but I would be happy with 16...♕xb2! 17 ♘c4!? (17 ♗xd6 ♗g4!; 17 ♖b1 ♕a3!? 18 ♗xd6 ♗g4 19 f3 ♕e3+) 17...♕xe2 18 ♘xd6 ♕xd1 19 ♖fxd1 ♖d8 = or 19...♖e2 =.

b) 11 h3 ♖e8 (perhaps the simplest move; both 11...♖b8 and 11...h6 also equalize, according to theory):

b1) 12 ♗f4 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 (13 ♗xd6 ♕b6) 13...f6 14 ♗d2 f5 15 ♗g5 ♗f6 (15...♕b6 16 ♕d2 ♘df6 17 a5 ♕c7 =) 16 ♕d2 ♘e5 =.

b2) 12 ♕c2 b6 13 ♖b1 ♕c7 14 ♗f4 ♘h5 15 ♗d2 ♘e5 = 16 g4!? ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♘f6 18 b4 ♘d7 19 bxc5 ♘xc5 is equal, Koskinen-Sher, Copenhagen 1996.

b3) 12 ♖e1 ♘e4 (this resembles the ...♖e8 systems covered in Line B, but here h3 is of little use to White) 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♕c2 ♕e7!? (14...♖e8 =) 15 ♗d2 ♘f6 16 ♘h4 ♗d7! 17 ♗c3 ♖e8 18 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♖a3 (20 ♔g2 ♘g5 21 g4 h5 22 f3 ♘h7 =), Razuvaev-Tal, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983, and now 20...♗xh3 = is easiest, with two pawns for the exchange.

c) 11 ♖b1 ♖e8 12 b4 (12 ♗d2 ♘b6! 13 e4 ♘c4 14 ♗c1 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16

b3 ♘a3! 17 ♗xa3 b4 ∓ Lehman-Hartoch, Switzerland 1971) 12...♕c7 13 ♗d2 ♘b6 14 ♘g5 ♗f5 15 bxc5 ♕xc5 16 ♖c1 ♘c4 ('unclear' – *ECO*) 17 h3 ♕b6 18 ♗e1 ♘e3! ∓ P.Nikolić-Velimirović, Yugoslav Ch 1983.

d) 11 ♕c2 ♖b8 (11...♖e8 12 e4 ♕c7 transposes to note 'b' to White's 11th move in Line B2) 12 a5 b5 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 ♘d2 ♘fd7!? 15 ♘b3 ♘c4 16 ♘d2 ♘cb6 = Rohde-D.Gurevich, New York 1985.

e) 11 ♖e1 ♕c7 (11...♖b8 is considered completely equal as well) 12 ♘d2 ♖b8 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♖a2 ♘fd7 16 ♕c2 c4! 17 ♘de4 h6 18 ♗f4 ♘e5 = Alburt-Hjartarson, Philadelphia 1986.

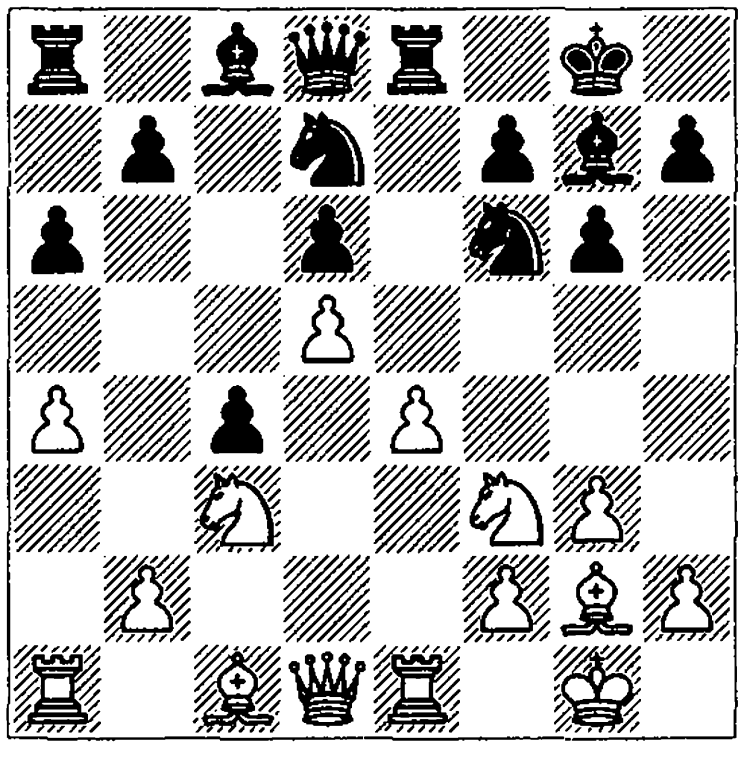
A1)

11 e4 ♖e8

Also played is 11...♖b8 12 ♖e1 b5.

12 ♖e1 c4! *(D)*

12...♘g4 is an extremely common move here, but I prefer this aggressive approach.



W

13 ♗f1

Other moves are answered tactically:

a) 13 h3 ♘c5 14 ♘d2 ♘d3 15 ♖e2 ♕c7 16 a5 ♗d7 17 ♘a4, Brenninkmeijer-de Firmian, Lugano 1989, and now I like just 17...♘xc1! 18 ♕xc1 ♘xd5 ∓.

b) 13 ♗f4 ♘c5 14 e5 ♘g4! 15 e6? fxe6 16 dxe6 ♘d3 ∓ Ligterink-Van Blitterswijk, Leeuwarden 2000.

c) 13 ♕e2 ♘c5! intending 14 ♕xc4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♕xc5 dxc5 17 ♖xa8 b4 ∓ Ligterink.

13...♕c7 14 ♕d4

14 ♕e2 ♘c5 15 ♕xc4 transposes to the main line.

14...♘c5 15 ♕xc4 ♗g4 16 ♗g2

Black also achieves good play following 16 ♘d2 ♘fd7:

a) 17 e5? ♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♕f4 g5! 20 ♕b4 (20 ♕xg5?? ♘b3! 21 ♘xb3 ♘f3+) 20...♗f5 ∓ threatening ...♘d3, Piket-Winants, Wijk aan Zee 1987.

b) Black has compensation after 17 ♕b4 f5 18 f3 and now either 18...♗h5 19 ♔g2 ♘e5 20 ♖e3 a5!? 21 ♕b5 ♖f8! 22 exf5 gxf5 = or 18...♗h3!? 19 ♖e3 ♗xf1 20 ♔xf1 ♘e5 =.

c) Similarly, 17 ♕a2 f5 18 h3 ♗h5 intending moves like ...♖ac8 and ...g5 is quite satisfactory.

16...♘fd7 17 ♗f4 ♘b6 18 ♕f1

18 ♕b4 ♘d3 19 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 20 ♗xd6 ♘c4! ∓ Veličković.

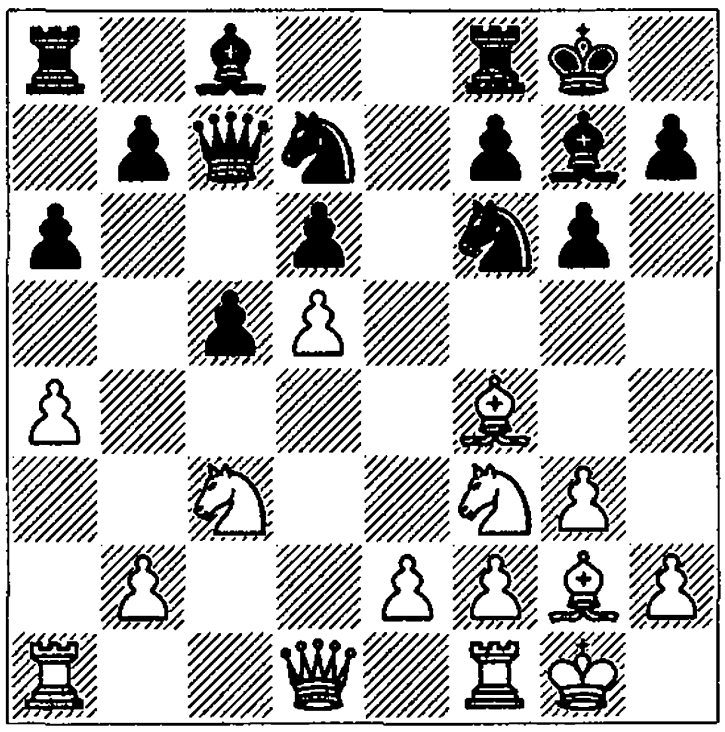
After the text-move (18 ♕f1), Elsness-Emms, Gausdal 1995 continued 18...♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♘xe4 20 h3 ♗d7 21 ♕d3 ♘c5 ∓. The line beginning with 12...c4 is a good illustration of Benoni dynamism.

A2)

11 ♗f4 ♕c7 *(D)*

In this kind of position, I prefer the queen on c7, supporting queenside counterplay and, after ...♖b8 and ...b5, covering a7.

11...♕e7!? is also played, when a few ideas are shown by 12 h3! (12 ♕d2 ♘g4! 13 h3 ♘ge5 =) 12...♖e8 13 e4 (13 ♕d2 ♖b8) 13...b6!? (13...♖b8 14 ♖e1 ♘h5 15 ♗g5 ♕f8 may be slightly more accurate) 14 ♖e1 ♘h5 15 ♗g5 ♕f8. Probably White has an edge here, but it's not so easy to demonstrate.



12 h3

As usual, there are quite a few important alternatives:

a) 12 e4 ♖e8 13 ♕c2 (13 ♖e1 ♘g4 14 ♕c2 ♘ge5 = Ruck-Stević, Pula 1999) 13...♘g4!? Schneider; this looks equal. Black could also play 13...♖b8 14 a5 ♘h5 15 ♗e3 b5 16 axb6 ♘xb6 17 h3, Polugaevsky-Vaiser, Sochi 1981, when 17...f5!? is intriguing.

b) 12 ♕d2 ♖e8 13 h3 (13 ♖fc1 has been successfully answered by 13...c4, 13...♘b6 and 13...♘h5) 13...c4 (*ECO* gives 13...♖b8) 14 ♗h6 ♗h8 15 ♕c2 ♘c5?! (15...♖b8!) 16 ♘d2 ♘cd7 17 e4 ± Conquest-Hjartarson, Hastings 1985/6.

c) 12 ♖c1 has several adequate responses:

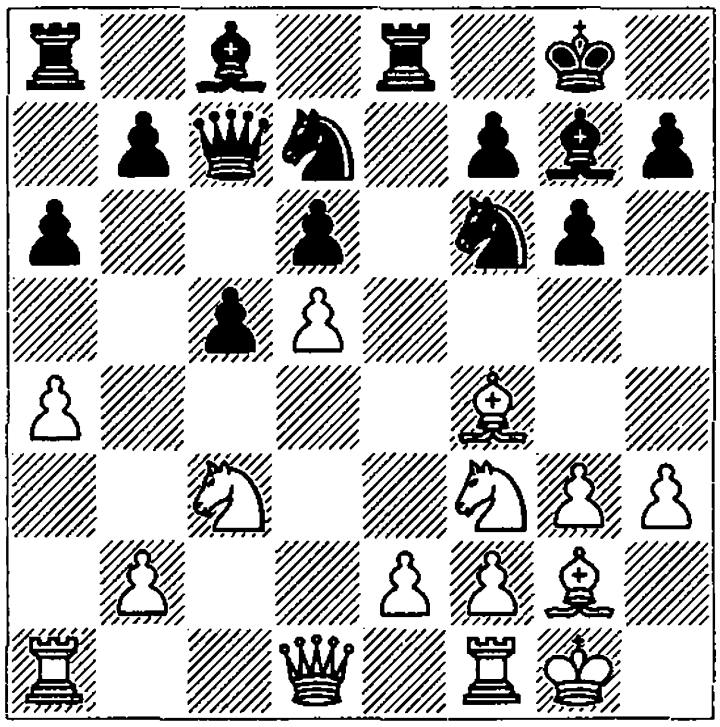
c1) 12...♕b8!? 13 h3?! (13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 is double-edged) 13...b5 14 axb5 axb5 ∓ Freeman-Giulian, British Ch (Ayr) 1978.

c2) 12...♖e8 13 b4 (13 h3 ♖b8 14 ♔h2, Scherbakov-Kovačević, Belgrade 2000, and now Black should play consistently with 14...b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4 ♕b6!; e.g., 17 bxc5 ♘xc5 or 17 ♗e3 ♖xe3!, which looks very good for Black) 13...♘h5 14 ♗g5 (14 ♗d2 b6 =) 14...h6 15 ♗e3 ♖xe3!? 16 fxe3 cxb4 17 ♘e4 ♕b6 18 ♘d4 a5 gives Black compensation: 19 ♕c2 f5 20 ♘d2 (20 ♘f2 ♘c5 21 g4!? ♘f4! 22 gxf5 b3! 23 ♕c4 ♘xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♗xf5! with more than enough for the exchange, P.Nikolić-Hjartarson, Linares 1988) 20...♗xd4 21 exd4 ♕xd4+ 22 e3! ♕xe3+ 23 ♔h1, Krause-Lindemann, corr. 1994, and now Krause gives 23...♘e5! 24 ♕c7! ♕xd2 25 ♕xd6 ♘d7 26 ♕e6+ (not, however, 26 ♕xg6+? ♘g7) 26...♔f8 27 ♕d6+, with a draw.

c3) 12...♘h5 13 ♗g5 ♖e8 (13...h6 has also equalized) 14 ♕d2 ♘hf6 (White's pieces are now a little misplaced) 15 ♗h6 ♗h8 16 h3 ♘e4 17 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 18 b4 ♕d8! 19 ♖b1 a5! 20 bxa5 ♖xa5 with a slight advantage for Black, Draško-Velimirović, Subotica 2000.

12...♖e8 *(D)*

Or 12...♖b8 13 ♖c1 h6 14 e4 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 g5 16 ♗d2 b5 = Blees-Dambacher, Rotterdam 1999.



13 ♖e1

13 ♕c2 ♖b8 (a good alternative is 13...♘h5 14 ♗d2 ♘e5 = 15 g4!? ♘xf3+ 16 ♗xf3 ♘f6 17 b3 h5! 18 g5 ♘h7 and Black is slightly better, Chiburdanidze-Wang Yu, Shenyang FIDE wom World Cup 2000) 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 16 e4 ♘h5 17 ♗c1 (other retreats allow ...♘c4) 17...♘f6 (17...f5!? might be better) 18 ♔h2 ♘c4, perhaps lightly ±, Korchnoi-Haapasalo, Copenhagen 1996.

13...♘h5

13...♖b8 14 e4 ♘h5 intending ...b5 has also equalized in several games.

After the text-move (13...♘h5), Razuvaev-Benjamin, Paris Ch 1989 continued 14 ♗d2 c4 (14...♖b8 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♘xb6 intending ...♘c4 is also reasonable) 15 b4 (else ...♘c5-b3) 15...cxb3 16 ♕xb3 ♘c5 = 17 ♕b4. Then I think that 17...♗d7 is the easiest way to play; for example, 18 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 19 a5 (19 g4 a5!? 20 ♕c4 ♘f6 =) 19...♕d8 20 g4 ♘f6 21 ♘d4 h5 22 g5 ♘h7 23 ♘f3 ♗f5 =.

A3)

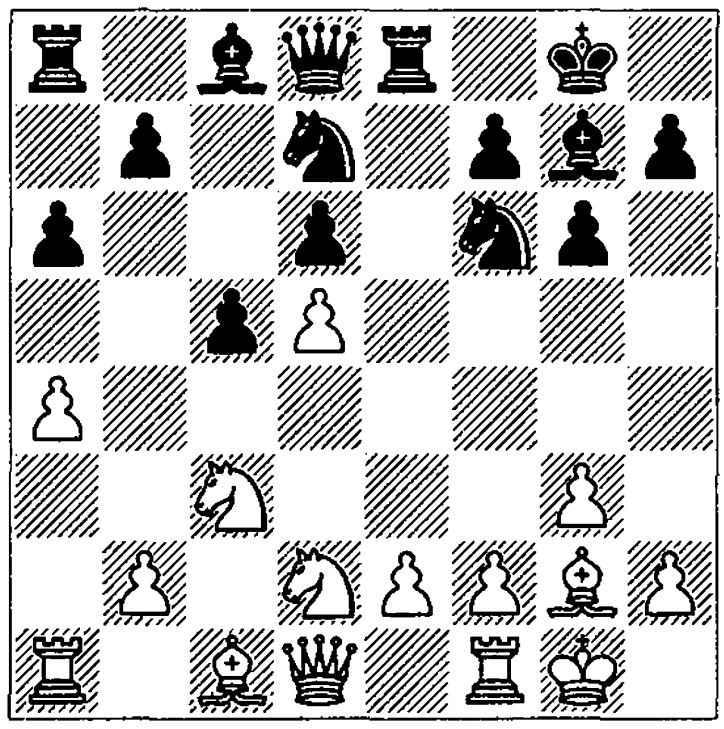
11 ♘d2

This is the critical variation of the Fianchetto System, so I will offer two lines to choose from:

A31: 11...♖e8 115
A32: 11...♘h5 123

A31)

11...♖e8 *(D)*



Now there are two very important answers, leading to a final split:

A311: 12 ♘c4 117
A312: 12 h3 118

The numerous alternatives tend to be less challenging, but they contain some essential ideas and are well worth playing through:

a) 12 ♕b3 ♖b8 (12...♘e5 13 f4!?, contrary to *ECO*, is just fine for Black after 13...♘eg4! 14 ♘c4 ♘h5 15 ♘e4 f5!) 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘b6 ♘fd7 (or 14...♘ed7 15 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 16 a5 b5 17

axb6 ♖xb6 = Johansen-Rogers, Sydney 1991) 15 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 16 ♗h3 (16 h3 b5!? 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖a5 b4 19 ♘e4 ♕c7 is equal, Sakaev-Anastasian, Frunze 1989) 16...f5, Ionescu-Stoica, Romanian Ch 1981. Now Stoica gives 17 f4 ♘f7 18 e4 (else we have the familiar advantage of Black's e4 outpost and White's bad c1-bishop) 18...c4 19 ♕c2 ♘c5! 20 exf5 ♘d3 21 fxg6 ♕xh3 22 gxf7+ ♔xf7 as 'unclear' but this is ∓ or worse, since White's king is too exposed.

b) 12 a5 b5 (12...♖b8 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘b6 ♘ed7 = has also occurred) 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 ♘b3 (heading for a5 and c6) 14...♗d7 (14...♘c4 = is often played, but ♘a5-c6 turns out not to be a problem) 15 ♘a5 ♕c7 (or 15...♗b5 16 ♕c2 ♘fd7 17 ♖e1 ♘e5 = Ja.Bolbochan-Maderna, Argentine Ch (Buenos Aires) 1953) 16 ♖e1 ♘g4 17 h3 ♘e5 18 f4?! ♘ec4 19 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 20 ♕d3 ♘e3! 21 ♗e4 (21 ♗xe3 ♖xe3) 21...f5 22 ♗xe3 fxe4 23 ♕c4 ♕b7 24 ♖a3 ♕b4! 25 ♕a2 ♗d4! 26 ♗xd4 cxd4 with a winning position for Black, Klee-Lau, Dresden 1996.

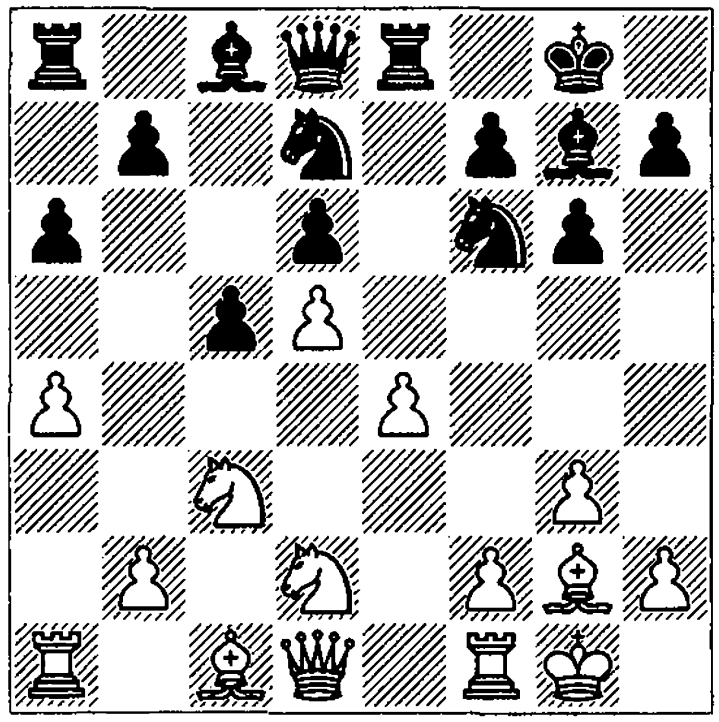
c) 12 ♖a2 ♖b8 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 b3 ♘fd7 (15...♘g4 16 ♗b2 ♕e7 17 e4 ♘e5 18 ♕c2 c4! ∓ Kekki-Kuczynski, Pohja 1985; 15...♘h5 16 ♗b2 f5 17 e3 ♘f6 18 ♗a1 ♕e7 19 ♖e1 ♘g4!, at least =, Dautov-Oll, Kiev 1984) 16 ♕c2 f5 17 ♗b2 ♘f6 18 ♖d1 ♕e7 = Roos-Moiseev, Berlin 1994.

d) 12 ♖e1 (a move seldom seen at this juncture, since on d2 the knight no longer supports e4-e5) 12...♖b8 13 ♘c4 (13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 is a type of position we have seen many times; e.g., 15 h3 ♘fd7 16 ♔h2 ♕e7 17 ♘de4 h6 18 ♗f4 ♘c4! ∓ Berezin-Brodsky, Swidnica 1999) 13...♘b6 (13...♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 =) 14 ♘a3 ♗d7 (likewise, a standard manoeuvre) 15 a5 ♘c8 16 ♘c4 ♗b5 17 ♕b3 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♘d7 = Kruck-Zawadzki, Litohoto 1999.

e) 12 ♕c2 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 (13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 e4 ♘g4 = Krasenkow-Gritsak, Suwalki 1999) 13...♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 17 e4 ♗d7 18 ♗d2 ♖e7 19 h3 ♕b8 = 20 ♖a2 ♘e8 21 ♖fa1 ♘c7, intending ...f5 or ...♘b5-d4, Liberzon-Stein, USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1966/7.

f) 12 e4 *(D)*.

B



12...♖b8 (or 12...♕c7 13 ♘c4 ♘b6 14 ♘a3 ♗d7 15 a5 ♘c8 16 ♘c4 ♗b5 =) 13 ♘c4 ♘b6 (13...♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 a5?! b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 ∓ Conquest-Sigurjonsson, Brighton 1981) 14 ♘a3 ♘a8!? (an unusual idea, especially when White hasn't played a5, allowing ...♘c7-b5; 14...♗d7 would be normal) 15 ♖e1 ♘c7 16 ♗f1 b5!? 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘axb5 ♘xb5 19

♗xb5 ♗d7 20 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 21 ♔g2 ♘g4 is unclear, Quinteros-Estevez, Torremolinos 1974. This reminds me of a Benko Gambit, in spite of the different pawn-structure.

g) 12 ♖b1 ♖b8 13 b4 b5 (13...cxb4 14 ♖xb4 ♘c5 is also equal, as in Soppe-Rosito, Saenz Pena 1996 and Chiburdanidze-Uskova, Istanbul wom OL 2000) 14 axb5 axb5 = 15 bxc5? b4 16 ♘ce4 ♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 dxc5 18 e4 (18 ♘c4 ♗f5 19 ♖b3 ♗e4) 18...♗a6 19 ♕b3 (19 ♖e1 ♗d3) 19...c4! 20 ♘xc4 ♘xe4 21 ♖e1 ♘c5 0-1 Vaganian-Tseshkovsky, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1974. This game illustrates how devastating Black's piece activity can be.

A311)

12 ♘c4 ♘b6

Theory approves 12...♘e5 as well, but the theory on it could fill a small book. In my opinion, 12...♘b6 is fully satisfactory and provides plenty of winning chances.

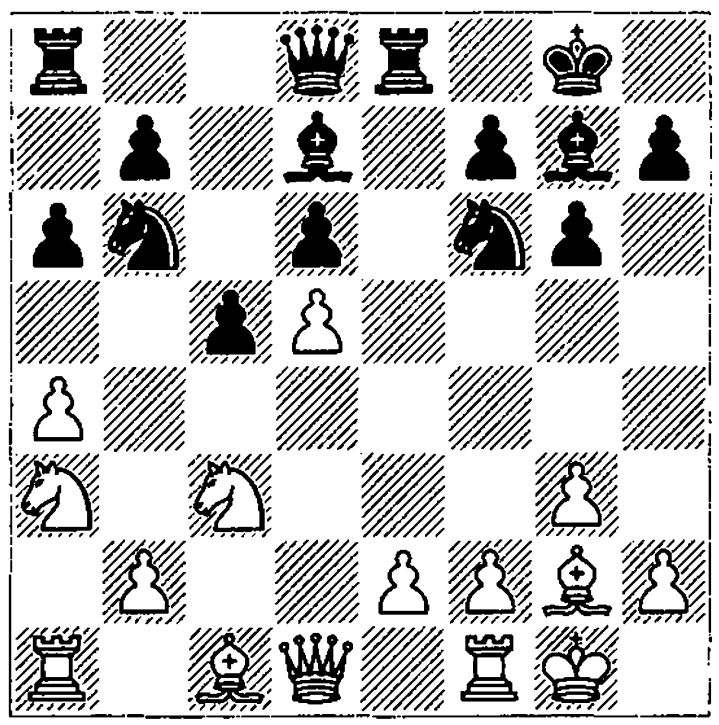
13 ♘a3

Or:

a) 13 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 14 a5 ♕c7 is harmless, as usual: 15 ♕c2 (15 e4 ♗d7 16 f4, Litwin-Ostrowski, Polanica Zdroj 1994, and now either 16...♘g4 17 ♔h1 f5 or 16...b5 is good) 15...♖b8 16 e4 ♘d7 (16...b5) 17 ♘d1!? b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 19 ♘e3, Krasenkov-Sher, Moscow 1990, 19...♗d7! 20 ♗d2 ♗b5 = Schneider.

b) 13 ♘e3 ♘g4 14 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 15 h3 ♗d7 (15...♗xc3!?) 16 ♕d3 ♖b8 with equality, Ståhlberg-Kluger, Bucharest 1954.

13...♗d7 *(D)*



This idea applies to a variety of lines in more than one chapter. Black both develops and frees c8 as a retreat for the knight should White play a5. In that case, the knight can go from c8 via a7 to b5, or it can spring back into play following ...b5 and ...♘xb6 (after White's axb6). In the absence of a5, Black can play ...♖b8 to prepare, e.g., ...♘a8-c7 and ...b5; or he has interesting tactical ideas based upon ...♘xa4 and ...b5, which are not so easy to prevent.

14 ♗d2

Best, according to both *ECO* and Schneider. The idea is to get b3 in at the right moment. At any rate, nothing else should scare Black:

a) 14 ♗f4?! ♘h5! 15 ♗d2 (certainly not 15 ♗xd6?? ♗xc3! 16 bxc3 ♗xa4) 15...♘xa4! 16 ♘xa4 b5. This is a standard sacrifice, as we will see from the many examples that follow.

b) 14 a5 ♘c8 15 ♘c4 ♗b5 16 ♕b3 ♗xc4 (16...♕d7!?) 17 ♕xc4 b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 (even 18...♕xb6 followed by ...♘d7 seems adequate) 19 ♕h4 (19 ♕d3 ♕e7) 19...♘fd7 20 ♗g5 (20

♕xd8 ♖exd8 21 ♖a2 ♖db8 22 ♖d1 a5 23 e4 a4 = Minev-Hulak, Pula 1975) 20...♕b8! = Piankov-Psakhis, Irkutsk 1977.

c) 14 h3 ♘xa4!? (or 14...♖b8) 15 ♘xa4 b5 16 ♘c3 b4 17 ♗d2 bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♘e4 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕c2 f5 21 ♘c4 ♗b5 22 b3 ♕f6 = Akopian-Telčić, Belgrade 1988.

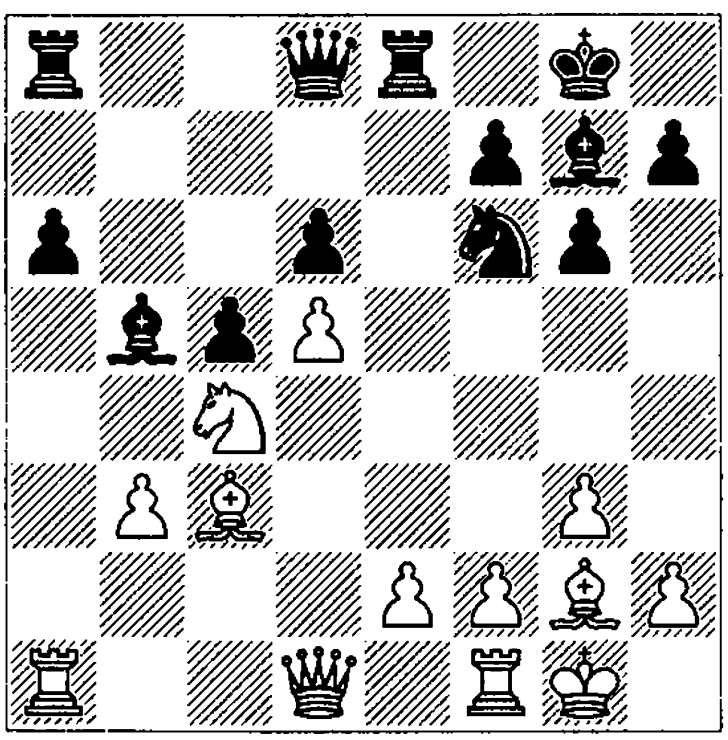
d) 14 ♕c2 ♕c7 15 h3 (15 ♗d2 ♖ab8 16 h3 ♘xa4! 17 ♘xa4 b5 is equal, Spassov-Barlov, Vrnjačka Banja 1984) 15...♘xa4! (again!) 16 ♘xa4 b5 17 ♘c3 (17 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♕xc5 dxc5 is unclear or perhaps ∓, because White's pieces are awkwardly placed) 17...b4, Loviscek-Bednarich, Nova Gorica 2000, and now White should bail out with 18 ♘ab1 bxc3 19 ♘xc3 ♗b5 =.

14...♘xa4!

Why not? It seems there is hardly a position in which this *doesn't* work.

15 ♘xa4 b5 16 ♘c3 b4 17 ♘c4 bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗b5 19 b3 *(D)*

B



19...♘e4

Played to improve upon 19...♘g4 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 e4 ♘e5 22 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖e1, Lalić-Sax, Sarajevo 1985, given as ± in several sources, although this doesn't seem obvious after something like 23...♖e7!? 24 f4 (the idea in that game) 24...f6 25 ♗h3 ♕b6 26 ♔h1 ♖ae8 27 ♗e6 ♗d7 28 ♗xd7 ♖xd7.

Aside from all this, *Fritz* suggests 19...♖a7!?, and indeed, it's hard to believe that Black will be worse after ...♖ae7. In general, Black has no real problems in this line.

20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♕c2 f5 22 ♕b2+?!

Remarkably, White gets in trouble after this natural move. Uninspired but better is 22 e3.

22...♕f6!

Now:

a) 23 ♕c2? was played in D.Bekker Jensen-Bjarnehag, Copenhagen 1998, where Black chose 23...♖ab8?, missing the opportunity for 23...♗xc4! 24 bxc4 (24 ♗xe4 ♗xe2!) 24...♘xf2! and Black is winning due to 25 ♔xf2 ♕d4+.

b) White should prefer 23 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6, but Black still has the advantage owing to the threat of ...♗xc4 followed by ...♘d2.

I believe that the line with 12...♘b6 is fully sound, and much easier to learn than 12...♘e5.

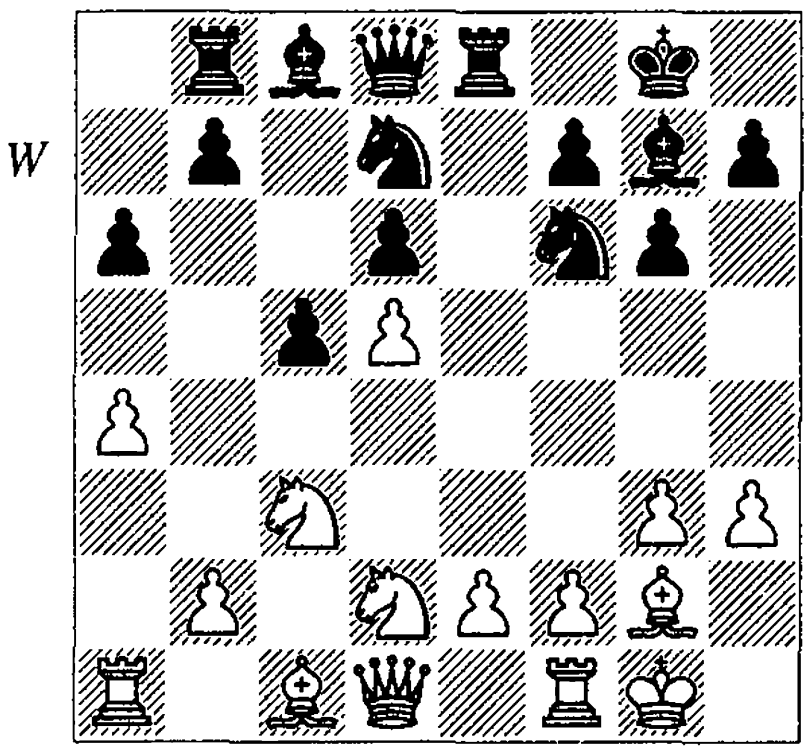
A312)

12 h3

This is a subtle move, taking away the ...♘g4-e5 option we saw so often in earlier lines, and not yet committing to ♘c4.

12...♖b8 *(D)*

Black has had some success with 12...♘h5, but I'll stick with the scheme we used in the last section.



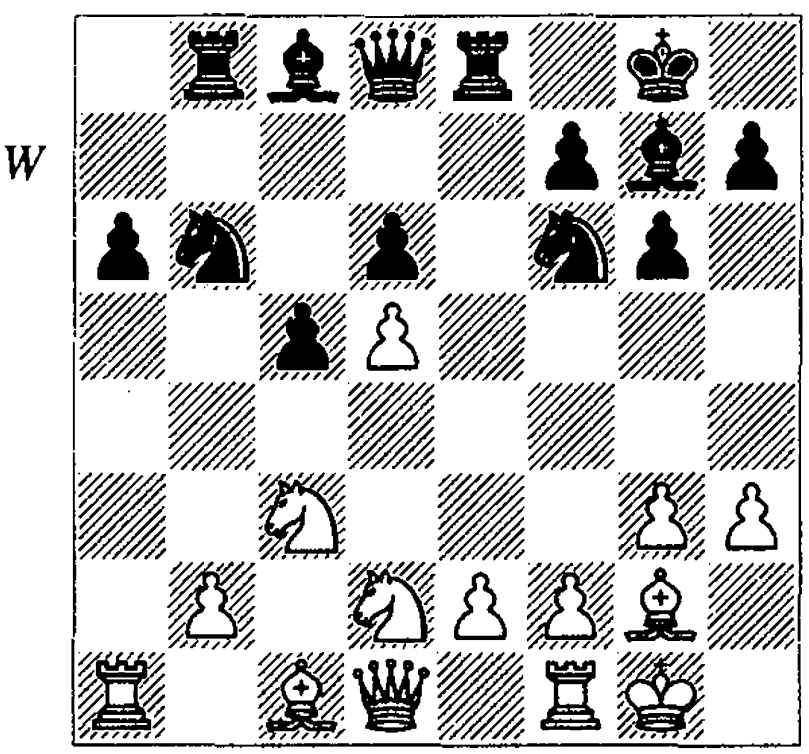
13 ♘c4

This is most often played, although 13 a5 (line 'c') in particular has produced some very interesting play:

a) 13 ♖b1 ♘h5 (the idea is to threaten ...b5 without the possibility of b4 in reply) 14 ♘de4!? (14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♘a3 f5 16 e4 b5! 17 axb5 axb5 18 b4 ♘f7 = Johannessen-Tisdall, Gausdal 1995; 14 ♘ce4 ♘df6 =; 14 ♕c2 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4 ♕c7! and the c3-knight is a liability) 14...♘df6 15 g4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 f5! 17 ♘xc5?! (17 ♘xd6 is critical, but I think that Black stands well; e.g., 17...♕xd6 18 gxh5 gxh5 19 ♕c2 f4! 20 ♖d1?! ♖f8 {intending ...♗f5} 21 ♖a1 ♗d4! with the idea 22 ♕b3? f3! 23 exf3 ♗xh3! ∓) 17...fxg4 18 ♘e6 ♗xe6 19 dxe6 gxh3 20 ♗xh3 ♕h4! ∓ Lalić-Kovačević, Ossiach 1984.

b) 13 ♘de4 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘f6 (14...♘e5!? Schneider) 15 ♗g5 ♗f5 16 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♕d2 b5 19 axb5 ♖xb5 20 ♕c3 ½-½ Kuzmin-Grigorian, Minsk 1976.

c) 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 *(D)* and now:



c1) 15 ♘b3 ♘c4 16 ♖a4 ♕b6 17 ♖xc4 ♕xb3 = De Briey-Alvis, Leon 1996.

c2) 15 ♖a2 ♕c7 16 b3 ♘fd7 17 ♗b2 f5 18 ♖e1 ♖f8 (18...♗b7! with the idea ...♘f6) 19 f4 ♘f6 20 ♔h2 c4!? 21 b4 ♗b7 22 ♖a5 ♖fe8 is equal. Then, after 23 e3?, in Komljenović-Spraggett, Seville 1994 Black missed 23...♘fxd5! ∓; e.g., 24 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 25 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♗xg7 ♘xb4.

c3) 15 ♕c2 ♘h5 (15...♕c7 is a solid alternative) 16 ♕d3 (16 ♖a2 f5 =) 16...♗f5! 17 e4 ♗c8 18 ♔h2 f5 19 f4 ♘f6 = Skuja-Tal, Latvian Ch (Riga) 1958.

c4) 15 e4 ♘fd7 16 f4 (16 ♖e1 ♘e5 17 ♗f1 c4 = Kosnar-Borkovec, Czech Cht 1996/7) 16...c4!? (16...f5 17 ♖e1 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h2 ♘f6 = Ro.Hernandez-Holm, Siegen OL 1970) 17 e5?! dxe5 18 f5? gxf5 19 ♖xf5 ♘c5 ∓ Cuevas Rodriguez-Z.Franco, Cordoba 1994.

13...♘b6

I'm choosing this move to be consistent with the 12 ♘c4 ♘b6 of Line A311. Most of the same themes certainly apply.

14 ♘a3

Or:

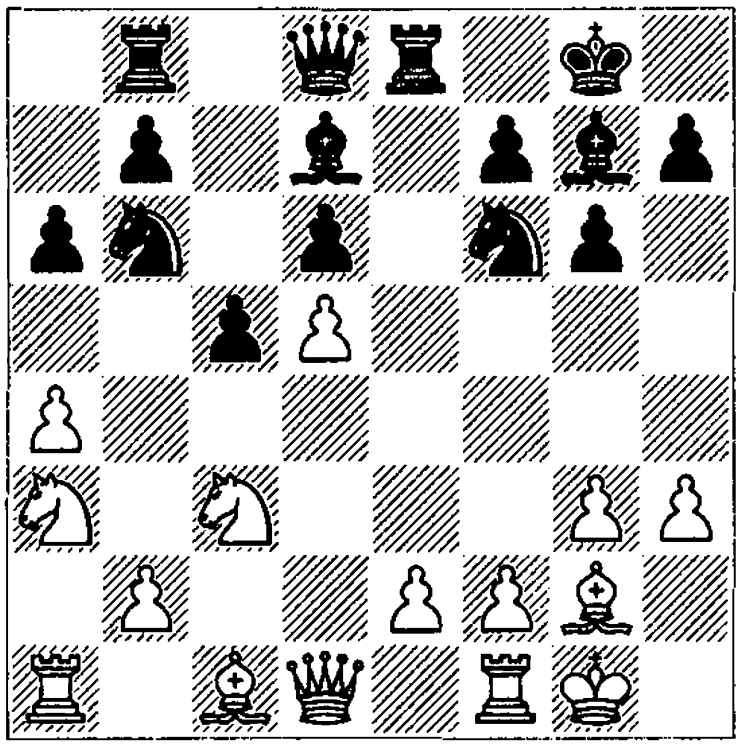
a) 14 ♘e3 ♗d7 15 ♗d2 ♘h5 16 a5 ♘c8 (or 16...♘a8 17 ♔h2 f5 18 f4 ♗b5 = Spasov-Rajković, Trstenik 1978) 17 ♘c4 f5 18 ♖e1 ♘f6 19 ♕c2 ♕c7 20 ♖ab1 and now, instead of 20...♗b5 21 ♘a3 ♗d7 = Kabisch-Kovačević, Lugano 1989, 20...b5! 21 axb6 ♘xb6 gives Black the initiative.

b) 14 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 15 a5 ♕c7 is, as always, innocuous: 16 e4 b5 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 f4 ♖b4 = L.Schmidt-Gonda, Tokyo 1989.

14...♗d7 *(D)*

I trust this more than 14...♗f5!? 15 g4 ♗d7 16 ♗f4 h5! 17 g5 (17 ♗xd6 ♗xa4) 17...♘h7 18 h4 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xa4, which Van der Sterren calls 'unclear'.

W



We have reached a critical position for this variation.

15 e4

This is now played almost exclusively. Of the alternatives here, 15 a5 (line 'c') used to be popular:

a) 15 ♕c2 is now met by the familiar tactic 15...♘xa4! (15...♘c8 is also playable) 16 ♘xa4 b5 17 ♘c3 (17 ♘xc5 dxc5 18 e4 b4 19 ♘c4 b3! 20 ♕d3 ♖b4 21 ♗d2 ♖xc4 22 ♕xc4 ♗b5 is 'unclear' – Magerramov) 17...b4 18 ♘c4 (18 ♗d2 bxc3 19 ♗xc3 was given as equal by Magerramov; Black then has 19...♗f5!) 18...bxc3 19 bxc3 (19 ♘xd6 cxb2 20 ♗xb2 ♖xb2! 21 ♕xb2 ♘e4 'with an attack' – Magerramov) 19...♗b5 20 ♘e3 ♘d7 21 ♖b1 c4 = Godzhaev-Magerramov, USSR 1987.

b) 15 ♗f4?! ♘h5! 16 ♗xd6 ♗xc3! 17 ♗xb8 (17 bxc3?? ♗xa4) 17...♗xb2 18 ♗a7 (18 g4 ♕xb8 19 gxh5 ♘xa4 20 ♖a2 ♘c3 21 ♕b3 ♘xe2+ 22 ♔h1 ♗g7 ∓ Hort-Marović, Banja Luka 1976) 18...♘xa4! '∓' V.Sokolov; then 19 ♖a2 ♗g7 (19...♘c3 20 ♕b3) 20 ♘b1 b5! ∓ still favours Black, since White will have to give back the exchange to stop the queenside pawns.

c) 15 a5 is an important move: 15...♘c8 16 ♘c4 ♗b5 (16...♕c7 is the older move, also satisfactory) 17 ♕b3 ♗xc4 (most often played, although 17...♘a7 and 17...♕d7 are also considered equal, an example of the latter move being 18 ♖d1 ♗xc4 19 ♕xc4 ♘a7 20 e3 ♘b5 21 ♗d2, Quinn-Sher, Hastings 1995/6, and now 21...b6 22 axb6 ♖xb6 is fine) 18 ♕xc4 ♘d7 19 ♕d3 (19 e4 ♘e5 {easier than 19...b5} 20 ♕e2 c4; 19 ♘e4 b5 20 axb6 ♘dxb6 21 ♕d3 c4 =; 19 f4!? b5 20 axb6 ♘cxb6 21 ♕d3 c4 22 ♕f3 ♘c5 "with

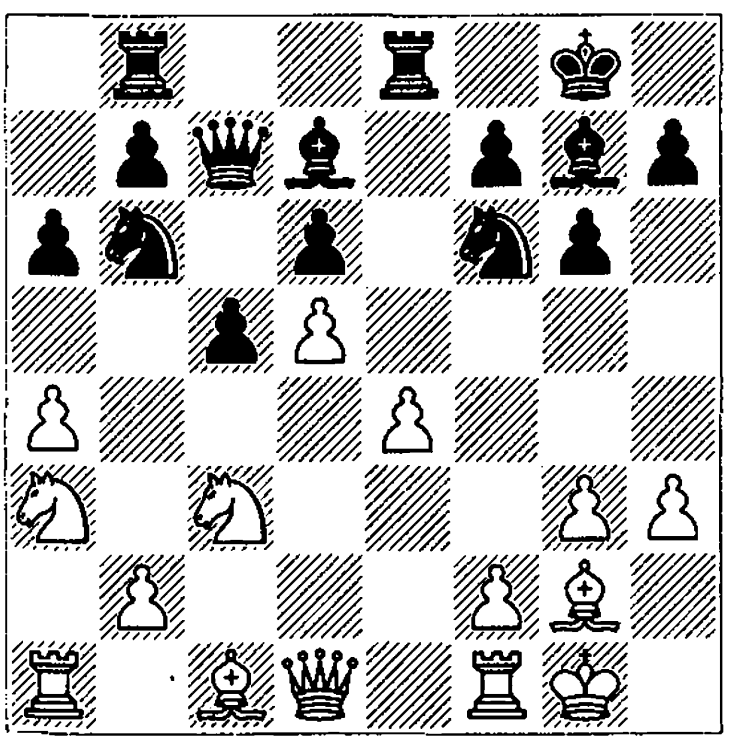
double-edged play" – Schneider; 19 ♖a3 ♘e7!? 20 ♕a2 ♘f5 21 e3 ♘e5 22 ♖d1 ♕c7 = Rubinetti-Gheorghiu, Buenos Aires 1979) 19...♘e5 (or 19...♕c7 20 ♕c2 ♘a7 21 ♖a2 b5 22 axb6 ♕xb6 = V.Mikhalevski-Ribshtein, Israeli League 2000) 20 ♕c2 ♘a7 21 ♖d1 ♘b5 22 ♘xb5?! (22 e3 =) 22...axb5 23 ♕b3 ♕d7 24 ♗f1 ♘c4! with the initiative, Liberzon-Yusupov, Lone Pine 1981.

15...♕c7 *(D)*

This move-order gives Black an extra possibility (see the note to Black's 16th move). Otherwise:

a) 15...♘c8 16 ♕d3 ♕c7 normally transposes to the main line after 17 ♗e3, since other moves favour Black, such as 17 ♖b1 c4!, Ljubojević-Hulak, Yugoslavia 1981, intending 18 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 19 ♘xc4 b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘d2 b4 22 ♘a2 ♗b5 ∓.

b) For once, 15...♘xa4?! seems to come up short: 16 ♘xa4 ♘xe4 (16...b5? 17 ♘xc5! {or 17 e5!?} 17...dxc5 18 ♖e1 b4 19 ♘b1 ♗b5 20 e5 ±) 17 ♕c2 b5 18 ♗xe4 ♗xh3 19 ♗g2 ♗xg2 20 ♔xg2 bxa4 21 ♘c4 ±.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16 ♗e3

16 ♖b1!? ♘xa4 17 ♘xa4 b5 18 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 19 ♗e3 ♕c8 20 ♖c1 ♕d8 ∓ V.Mikhalevski-de Firmian, Copenhagen 2000. Black has active pieces and pressure against e4.

16...♘c8

I think that Black is well enough off in what follows, but an alternative is 16...♘h5!? 17 a5 (17 g4 ♗xc3! 18 bxc3 ♗xa4) 17...♘c8 18 ♘c4 ♗b5 (18...b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6) 19 ♕b3 ♘a7 20 ♖fe1 ♗xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♕d7 22 b4 ♘b5! with unclear play, Lacrosse-Ljubojević, Antwerp 1994.

17 ♕d3 ♘a7

I don't trust 17...b5!? at all, a key game being 18 axb5 c4 19 ♕xc4 (or 19 b6 ± Osnos; then 19...♘xb6 20 ♕e2 intending ♖fc1 looks difficult for Black) 19...♕xc4 20 ♘xc4 axb5 21 ♘d2 b4 22 ♘d1 ♗b5 23 ♖e1 with an extra pawn, Quinteros-Gheorghiu, Novi Sad 1982.

18 ♖fc1 b5 19 b4

There have been at least six games from this position, and in none of them did White try 19 axb5, perhaps due to 19...♘xb5 20 ♘axb5 ♗xb5!? (20...axb5 21 b4) 21 ♘xb5 axb5 22 b4 c4 with ...♖a8 and (upon ♗d4) ...♘d7 to follow. Such positions tend to be satisfactory as long as Black doesn't have a bad bishop on d7.

19...c4 20 ♕f1

Or:

a) 20 ♕e2 bxa4! 21 ♘xc4!? ♘b5 22 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 23 e5 dxe5 24 ♕a2 ♗f8 ∓. Then 25 ♗c5!? ♗xc5 26 bxc5 ♕xc5 27 ♘xe5 ♕d4 28 ♘c6 ♗xc6 29 ♖d1 ♗xd5! was much better for Black

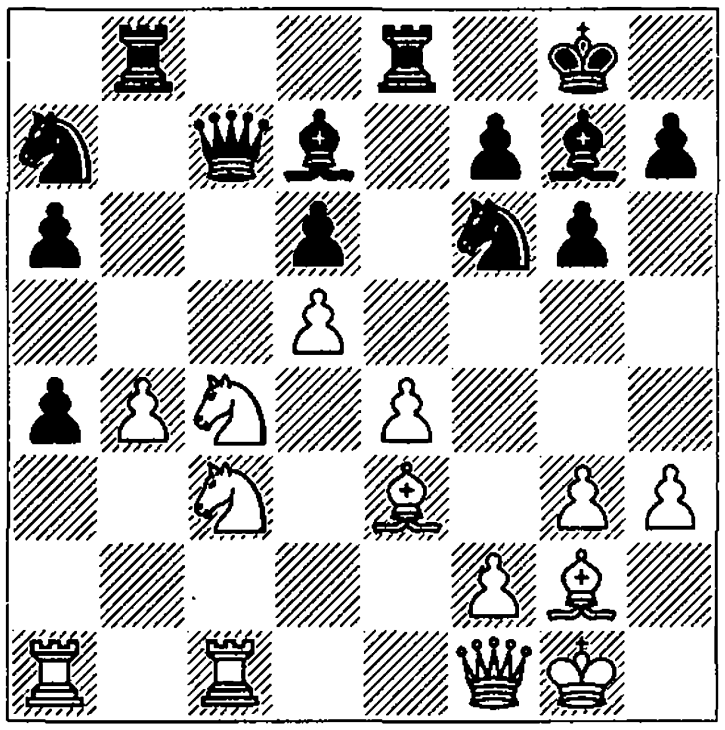
in the game Korchnoi-Franco, Lucerne OL 1982.

b) 20 ♕d2 bxa4 21 ♘xc4 (Birnboim-Y.Grünfeld, Israeli Ch 1986) 21...♖xb4 =.

20...bxa4

As seen in the last note, this is the standard way to activate Black's rook and clear b5.

21 ♘xc4 *(D)*

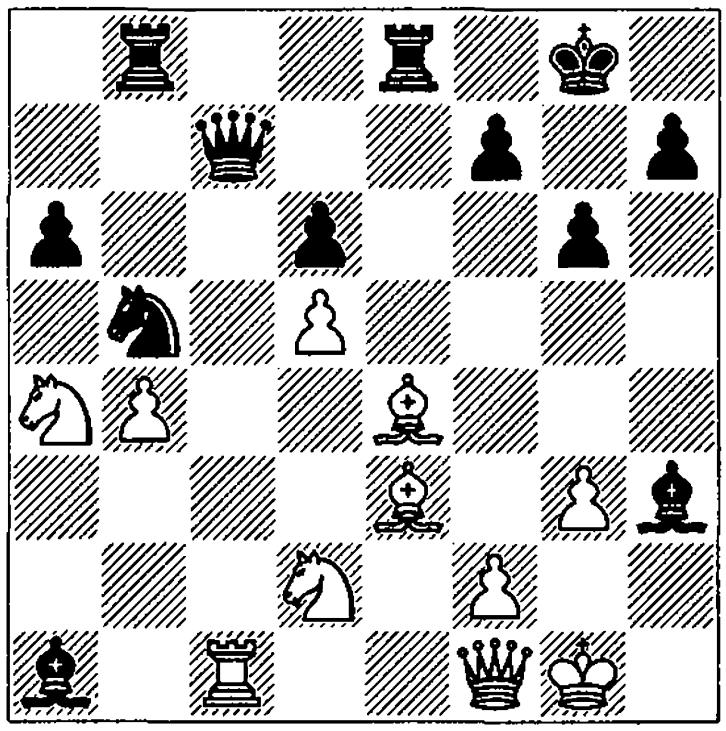


21...♘b5!

This appears to be the strongest move. 21...♖xb4!? is unclear: 22 ♘a2! (22 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♗xa7 ♘xe4! 24 ♘xe4 ♖bxe4 25 ♗c5 ♕xd5 26 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 ∓ Quinteros-Ki.Georgiev, Thessaloniki OL 1984) 22...♖b7 23 e5 dxe5 24 d6 ♕b8 25 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 26 ♘a5 ♕a8 with compensation – Georgiev. This is a hard position to assess.

22 ♘xa4 ♘xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xa1 24 ♘d2 ♗xh3! *(D)*

Or 24...♗c3 25 ♕d3 (25 ♔h2 ♗xd2! 26 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 27 ♗xd2 ♖xe4 with good play, Glek-Belinkov, corr. 1986) 25...♖bc8 26 ♘b6 f5 (26...♖cd8 is unclear, according to Glek and Piskov; 26...♗xh3!? also looks interesting, with the idea 27 ♘xc8 ♖xc8!? 28 ♘b1 ♕e7) 27 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 (27...fxe4 28 ♘xe4 ♖xc8 = *ECO*) 28 ♗g2 ♕d8 29 ♖b1, Ginting-Lukov, Thessaloniki OL 1988, and now Ginting mentions the logical 29...♕f6. Given the suggested improvements for Black, 24...♗c3 looks at least equal. But the text-move (24...♗xh3) may be even better.



25 ♖xc7

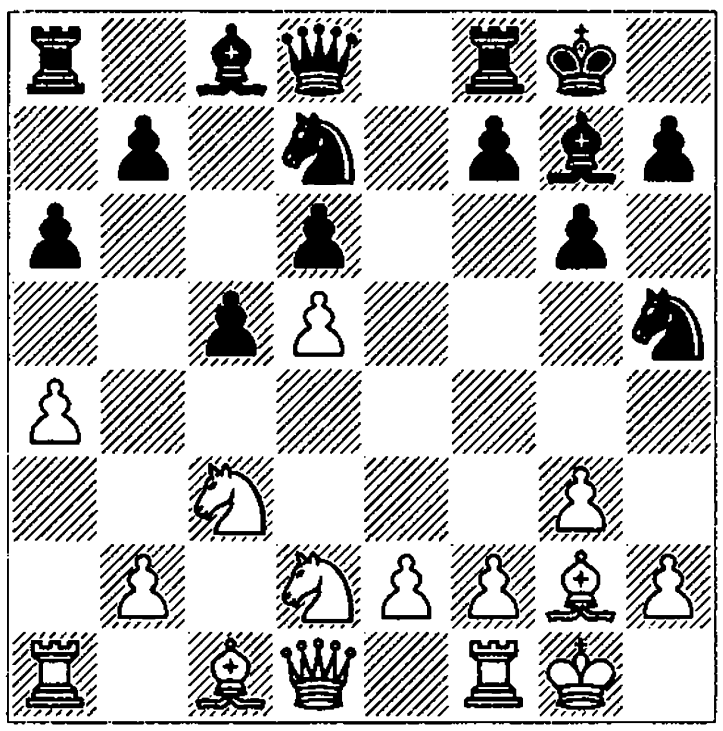
25 ♗g2 is supposed to be an improvement, but 25...♗xg2 26 ♔xg2 ♕b7 27 ♖xa1 (Glek and Pigusov) allows 27...♘c7! (27...♕xd5+ 28 ♘f3 ♕b3!?) 28 ♘c3 ♘xd5 29 ♘xd5 ♕xd5+ 30 ♘f3 ♖xb4 with a clear advantage; e.g., 31 ♖xa6 ♖eb8 32 ♖a1 ♕e4 ∓ with the idea ...♖b2, among others.

After the text-move (25 ♖xc7), Cvitan-Cebalo, Yugoslav Ch (Novi Sad) 1985 continued 25...♗xf1 26 ♖c1, and instead of the game's 26...♖xe4!?, 26...♗d4 looks like a safe continuation: 27 ♔xf1 (27 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 28 ♔xf1 ♖xb4) 27...♗xe3 28 fxe3 f5 29 ♗g2 ♖xe3 intending ...♖xg3 or ...♖a3.

In general, Black seems to do very well indeed in this main line with 13...♘b6.

A32)

11...♘h5 *(D)*



A completely different strategy. Black prevents f4, prepares ...♘e5 after ♘c4, and meets e4 tactically. This is either a second or even third option if you don't like Line A1 or the ...♖e8 ideas covered in Line B.

12 ♘de4

Considered best by theory. Here are the alternatives:

a) 12 ♘ce4 is rather like the text-move; e.g., 12...♘df6 13 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6! (this clears the back rank – Black has no need to fear White's ♘c4-b6; instead, 13...♗xf6 14 ♘c4 makes it hard for Black to develop smoothly) 14 ♘c4 and now:

a1) 14...♖b8 15 ♘b6 (15 a5 ♗d7 16 ♖b1, Derieux-Kovačević, Massy 1992, and now the most direct strategy is 16...♗b5 17 b3 ♕e7 18 ♗b2 ♗xb2 19 ♖xb2 f5) 15...♕d8 16 ♕b3 (we've already seen examples of positions such as 16 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 =, when the straightforward plan is ...♖e8 and ...♘f6, but Black can also contemplate ...f5 and ...♘f6, since White can't get a knight to e6) 16...♖e8 17 ♖e1 ♘f6 (17...f5!?) 18 ♗f4 ♘h5 19 ♗d2 ♘f6 20 ♗f4 ½-½ Reefschläger-Kindermann, Bundesliga 1984/5. If 20 ♘xc8, then 20...♕xc8 21 e4 ♘d7 22 ♗c3 c4 23 ♕c2 ♘e5, etc.

a2) Still better looks 14...♗d7!? 15 ♗d2 ♖ab8 (or 15...♕e7 16 e4 b5 17 ♘b6 ♖ae8) 16 ♗c3 ♕e7 17 ♘b6 f5! = with the idea ...♘f6, Birnboim-de Firmian, Thessaloniki OL 1984.

b) 12 e4 ♘e5 13 ♕e2 f5! = keeps the balance; e.g., 14 f4 ♘g4 15 ♘f3!? fxe4 16 ♕xe4? ♖e8 17 ♕c4 b5 ∓ Bender-Bogut, Pula 1996.

c) 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘ce4 ♘df6 14 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15 ♘c4 ♖e8 16 a5 ♘e4! = De Boer-Grooten, Leeuwarden 1997.

d) 12 ♘c4 ♘e5 13 ♘e3 (13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 f4 ♗g7 15 e4 ♗d7 = or 15...♖e8 =) 13...♖b8 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 16 h3 ♖b4 17 ♘c2 and now, instead of the brilliant but speculative 17...f5!?, as in Youngworth-de Firmian, Lone Pine 1981, Black can just play 17...♖b8 with equality.

12...♕e7

Or 12...♘df6!?, intending to answer 13 ♗g5 (or 13 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6) with 13...h6.

13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2

14 ♗h4 ♘e5 is comfortable for Black.

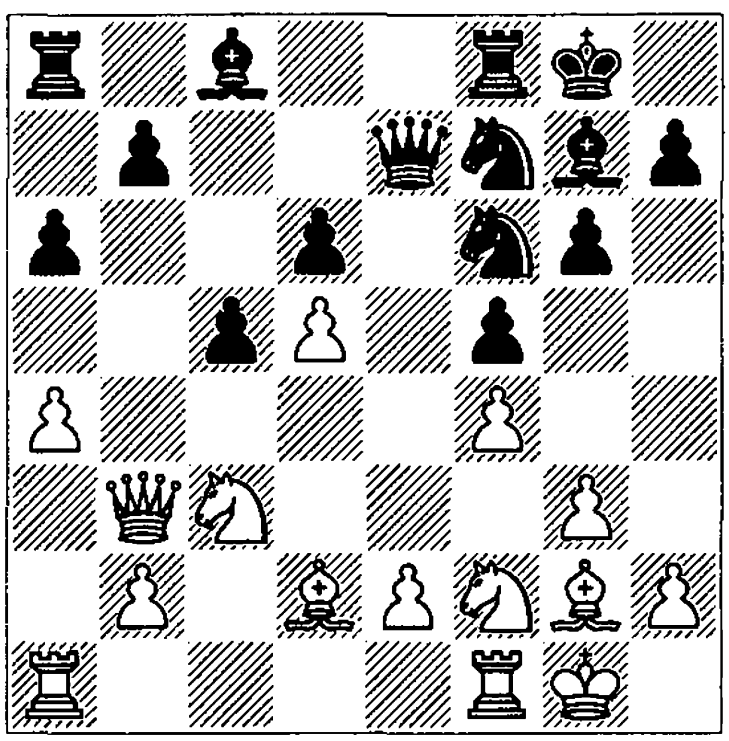
14...♘e5 15 ♕b3 ♘f7!

This covers d6 and g5, in preparation for ...f5.

16 f4 f5 17 ♘f2

Now, instead of 17...♕c7? 18 e4, as in Osnos-Commons, Plovdiv 1982, Schneider correctly suggests...

17...♘f6! *(D)*



18 a5

Schneider's move. Much more critical would be 18 e4 and, leaving out numerous space-consuming details, I would suggest 18...♘xe4 (18...fxe4!? might lead to 19 ♖fe1 ♕c7 20 ♘fxe4 ♗f5 21 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22 ♘e4 ♗d4+ 23 ♗e3 ♗g7 =) 19 ♘cxe4 fxe4 20 ♖fe1 ♗f5 21 ♘xe4 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♕d7 23 ♗c3 ♗xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♗xc3 25 ♕xc3 ♖ae8 = 26 ♖ae1 (26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 a5 ♘h6 =) 26...♖xe4 27 ♖xe4 b5 28 axb5 axb5 29 ♕f6 ♖a8! 30 ♖e1 (30 ♖e7 ♕f5) 30...c4 31 ♗f3 (31 ♖e7 ♕f5) 31...♕f5 32 ♕xf5 gxf5 =, due to the queenside pawns and ideas like ...♖a2.

18...♖e8

Now:

a) 19 ♖fe1 ♕c7 20 e4 c4 (20...♗d7 is unclear) 21 ♕c2 fxe4 22 ♘cxe4 ♗f5 =.

b) After 19 e3, Schneider suggests 19...♗d7 20 ♖fe1 ♖ab8 21 e4 ♕d8!, when Black should be fine.

B) Lines with ...♖e8

In this section, we look at ...♖e8 ideas which avoid the main ...♘bd7 systems of Line A. In most cases, Black will play ...♘e4, when after ♘xe4 and ...♖xe4, the rook is active but also exposed on its 5th rank. As is common with a second repertoire choice, these lines tend to be slightly less analysed and are rather committal, in that Black is often in a situation where he has active pieces, but may have to sacrifice the exchange to keep his initiative alive. A general feature is that Black unleashes his g7-bishop and achieves queenside pressure.

The reader is offered the choice of two approaches involving ...♖e8. They are obviously closely related, but involve some nuances that can be important; ultimately, the decision between them will probably be a matter of one's stylistic tastes:

B1: 9...♖e8 124
B2: 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 127

B1)

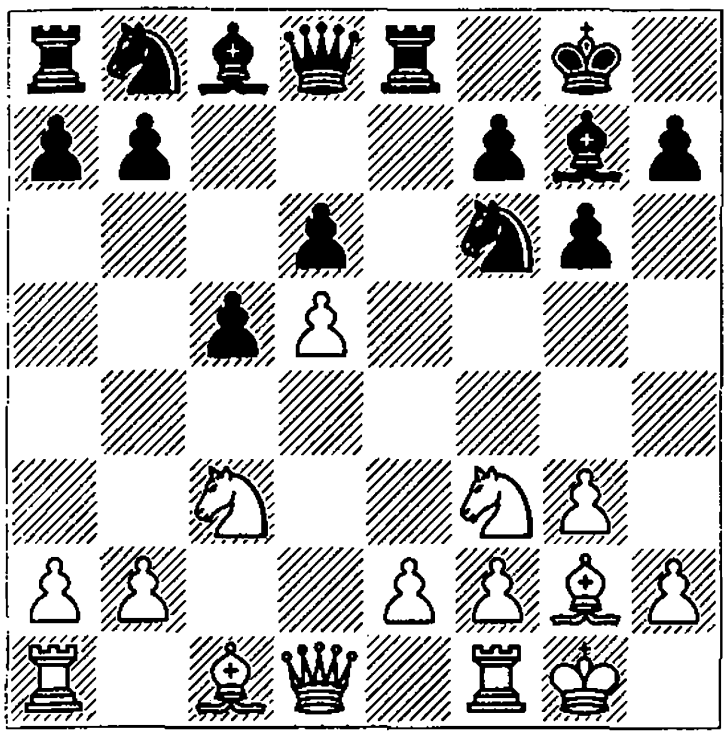
9...♖e8 *(D)*

10 ♗f4

One has to examine the alternatives to understand what's going on:

a) 10 ♖e1 and then:

a1) The easiest answer is 10...a6, when 11 a4 transposes to note 'a' to White's 11th move in Line B2, while 11 e4!? b5 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♖a7 is equal.



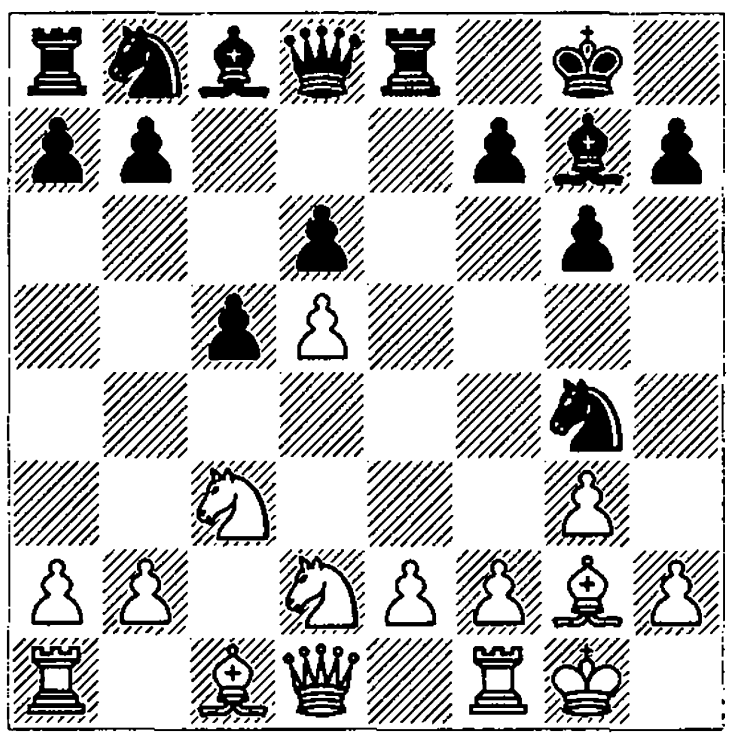
a2) Black can also try 10...♘e4!? 11 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♗g5 ♕f8! 13 ♘d2 ♖g4 14 ♗f4 g5 15 ♗e3 (15 h3 gxf4 16 hxg4 fxg3 17 fxg3 ♗xb2 18 ♖b1 ♗c3 =) 15...♗xb2 16 ♖b1, Razuvaev-Chiburdanidze, Tashkent 1980, and now 16...♗d4!? 17 h3 ♗xe3 18 hxg4 ♗d4 19 e3 ♗g7 is an interesting idea to gain long-term compensation for the exchange (two bishops, a pawn and White's poor kingside structure, limiting his bishop). Play might go 20 ♘e4 ♕e7 21 f4 (after 21 f3 ♘d7 or 21 ♕f3 ♘d7, Black's position is solid) 21...h6 22 ♕f3 ♘d7 23 ♖f1 b6 and Black can think about queenside expansion or play ...♘f6.

b) 10 h3 ♘e4!? (probably easier to play is 10...♘bd7 11 a4 {best, according to *ECO*}, when 11...♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♘d2 can now be answered by 13...♖e8 =) 11 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♗g5 (12 ♘d2 ♖e8 =) 12...♕c7 (12...♕e8 13 ♘d2 ♖b4 has been played) 13 ♘d2 ♖e8 14 ♗f4 (14 ♘e4 ♖xe4! 15 ♗xe4 ♗xh3 ∓; f1 and b2 hang) 14...♘d7 15 ♘c4 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 18 e4 ♗d7 19 ♕d2 was given as slightly better for White by *ECO*. But the continuation of G.Kuzmin-Bouaziz, Riga IZ 1979, 19...f6 20 f4 ♖e7, was equal according to Schneider, which seems fair, because Black has ...♖ae8 if necessary, with queenside play always in the offing.

c) 10 ♘d2 is the normal and arguably most important move, which transposes to Line A31 after 10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7. Black can try to avoid this as follows:

c1) 10...b6 is quite often played and probably OK, but it is harder to play than line 'c2' after 11 a4, when 11...♘a6?! 12 ♘c4 slightly favours White. Black's best line is 11...♗a6, when after 12 ♘b5, he should play actively by 12...♘bd7! 13 ♘c4 ♗xb5 14 axb5 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 16 ♕d3, Panno-Leskovar, Mar del Plata 2000. In this position, Black can continue 16...♕d7! 17 e4 ♖c8, soon threatening ...c4 and ...♕xb5, and intending ...♖ee8 and ...♖c7, the latter move being the standard method to defend against a cramping pawn on b5.

c2) 10...♘g4!? *(D)*. Then:



c21) 11 h3 ♘e5 12 f4 ♘ed7 13 e4 ♘a6!? 14 ♘c4 ♘b6 15 ♘e3 ♗d7 =.

c22) 11 e4 a6 12 a4 ♘e5 13 ♕c2 f5 14 h3 b6 15 f4 ♘f7 =.

c23) 11 ♘c4 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♕c2 "with the idea ♖b1, b4" – *ECO*; but aside from 13...♘d7 14 ♖b1 ♘b6 or 13...♘a6, Black even has the exotic 13...♗d7!? intending 14 a4 ♘a6 or 14 ♖b1? b5.

c24) 11 ♘de4 a6 12 ♗g5 (12 a4 f5 13 ♗g5 ♕c7) 12...f6 13 ♗f4 ♘e5 14 a4 ♘f7 15 ♘d2 g5!? (15...♘d7 =) 16 ♗e3 ♘d7 17 ♘c4 ♘de5 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♕c2 f5 = Kharitonov-Agzamov, Sevastopol 1986.

If 10...♘g4 (or 10...b6) works, and if Black is satisfied with White's other 10th move options, then this is a good way to avoid the transposition to Line A31 (9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2 ♖e8), which tends to undercut interest in the ...♘e4 idea.

10...♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♘d2 ♖b4 *(D)*

Here 12...♖xf4!? 13 gxf4 ♕f6!?, Deuster-Grassmeh, corr. 1990, should be met by 14 ♕c1! ♕xf4 15 ♘c4 ♕f6 16 ♕e3 ♗d7 17 ♕g3 ♗f8 18 b3 ±.

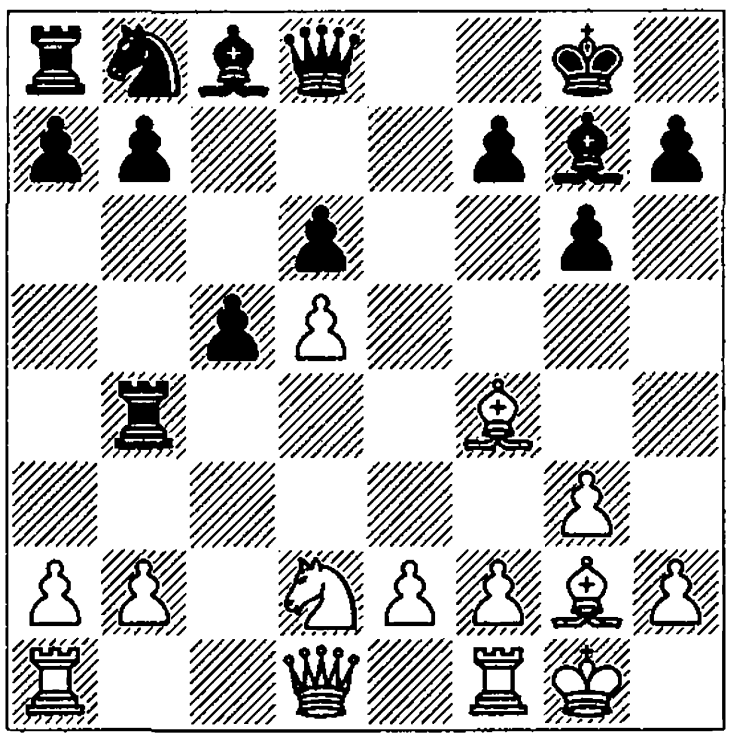
This diagram (*see top of following column*) looks very similar to the position we will see in Line B2 (with ...a6 and a4 in), but there are some different themes:

13 a3!?

Or:

a) 13 ♖b1 g5 14 ♗e3 ♗f5 15 a3 ♖xb2 16 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 17 ♘e4!? (17 ♕b3 ♗f6 18 ♕xb7 ♘d7 19 ♘c4 ♘b6 20 ♕a6 ♘xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♕e7 22 ♗d2 ♖b8 = Ligterink-Tindall, Hoogeveen

W



1998) 17...h6 18 ♕b3 ♗xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗d4!? 20 ♗xd4 cxd4 21 ♕xb7 ♘d7 22 ♕b4 ♕f6 23 ♖d1 ♖b8 24 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♖b3, Kaidanov-Norwood, Florida 1993. Black has full compensation, according to Norwood (White's bishop is poor, and ...♘c5 is coming).

b) 13 b3!? and now:

b1) 13...♗xa1!? 14 ♕xa1 was suggested some years ago. White has good compensation; e.g., 14...g5 15 a3 ♖b5 16 ♗e3 ♗f5 17 f4! ♕e7 18 ♕c3 g4 19 ♗f2 ♘d7 20 e4 ♗g6 21 ♖e1 with ideas like ♗f1 and ♘c4. This could be one reason to prefer having ...a6 and a4 in, but not necessarily so, since...

b2) 13...♖xf4 14 gxf4 ♗xa1 looks safe and is probably best.

13...♖xf4! 14 gxf4 ♗xb2 15 ♖a2

The point of inserting 12...♖b4 before sacrificing on f4: White's rook is forced to the less favourable a2-square, as opposed to b1.

15...♗g7

Now:

a) After 16 e4?, 16...♘a6?! (perhaps lightly ±) was played in the game

Alburt-Peters, USA Ch (South Bend) 1981. Norwood, who says that he's had the position after 15...♗g7 "a couple of times", notes that after e4, Black should play for ...♘d7-f6-h5 with pressure on the dark squares (a timely ...♗h6 might be handy as well). Thus 16...♘d7!, and aside from the trip to h5, Black can also advance on the queenside, with more than enough compensation.

b) 16 ♕b3 is less weakening. Then:

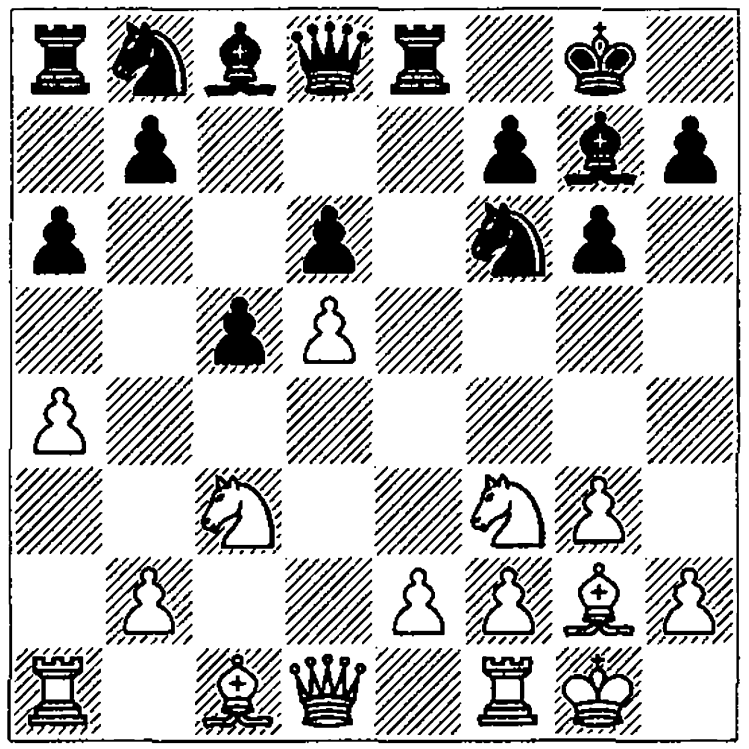
b1) 16...♘a6 17 ♘c4 ♖b8 18 a4 ♘b4 19 ♖d2 b6 20 ♖b1 a6 (something like 20...♕f6 21 e3 ♗f5 and ...♖e8 is also possible) 21 ♕a3 was the very interesting course of Flear-Collas, French Cht 1998. Black has systematically prepared 21...b5!, but he now got cold feet, probably due to 22 axb5 (22 ♖xb4 cxb4 23 ♕xb4 ♗f5! gives Black a clear advantage in view of 24 axb5? ♖xb5 or 24 ♘e3 a5!) 22...axb5 23 ♖xb4 (23 ♘a5 ♖a8; 23 ♘e3 ♗h6) 23...cxb4 24 ♕xb4, but then 24...♖a8! is practically winning: 25 ♘e3 ♕a5 ∓ or 25 ♕xb5? ♖a1+ 26 ♗f1 ♗h3 27 ♘e3 ♕c8 –+.

b2) Another approach is 16...♘d7 followed by ...♘f6 and ...♖b8. After 17 ♘c4, even the ambitionless 17...♘b6!? 18 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 19 ♕xb6 axb6 20 ♖b1 ♖a6 and ...♗f5 looks playable!

In all these lines, Black (with no weaknesses) has the bishop-pair and a pawn for the exchange which, along with White's immobile pawns, ensure him lasting compensation.

B2)

9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 *(D)*



A slightly different version of the ...♖e8/...♘e4 idea. This time, a black rook on e4 can swing over to b4 without being harassed by a3. But the trade-offs are hard to assess.

11 ♗f4

Instead, 11 ♘d2 again transposes to Line A31 after 11...♘bd7, but Black can deviate (see line 'd'), while the text-move (11 ♗f4) is the most important alternative (compare the analogous line without ...a6 and a4, i.e. Line B1). Still, as in Line B1, White's other alternatives are noteworthy:

a) 11 ♖e1 ♘e4 (after 11...♘bd7, 12 e4 transposes to Line A1, 12 ♘d2 reaches note 'd' to White's 12th move in Line A31 and 12 h3 is note 'b3' to White's 11th move in Line A) 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♕c2 ♖e8 14 e4 ♘d7 15 ♗f4 ♕e7! (better, I think, than *ECO*'s 15...♕c7 16 ♖ad1 intending b4) 16 a5 ♖b8 =.

b) 11 ♕c2 ♕c7 (11...♘bd7 12 e4 ♕c7 comes to the same thing; 11...b6!? 12 e4 ♖a7 is an alternative plan; for example, 13 ♗f4 ♖ae7 14 ♘d2 ♘h5, with the point 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗e3 f5!)

12 e4 ♘bd7 13 ♗f4, Kuzmin-Aseev, Tashkent 1984, and now a natural idea is 13...♘g4 14 a5 (14 ♘d2 ♖b8 15 h3 ♘ge5 16 ♗e3 b5 =) 14...♘ge5 15 ♘d2 ♖b8 = with ...b5 next.

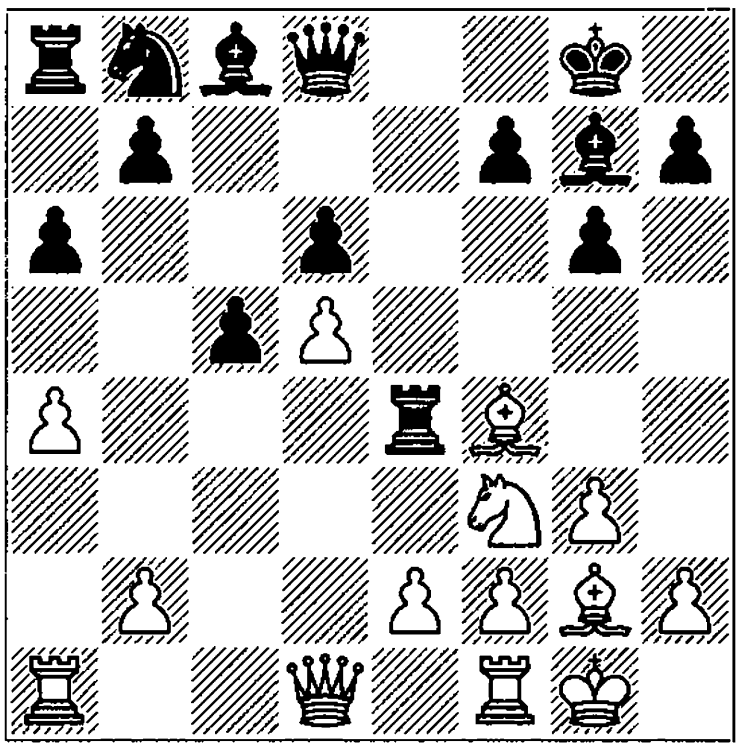
c) 11 h3 b6!? (11...♘bd7 transposes to note 'b' to White's 11th move in Line A; 11...♕c7 12 ♘d2 ♘bd7 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘a3 appeared in Kalinin-Juarez Flores, Dubai OL 1986, when 14...b6 was perhaps best; e.g., 15 f4 ♘ed7 16 ♘c4 ♘h5 17 ♔h2 f5) 12 ♖e1 ♖a7 13 ♘d2 ♖b7 14 e4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♘f1 b4 17 ♘b1 ♖be7! = Freeman-Levi, Melbourne 1996.

d) 11 ♘d2 is critical, as usual, when 11...♘bd7 again transposes to Line A31. Black can try to avoid this by 11...♘g4!?, as in Line B1. Play might go 12 a5 (12 ♘c4 ♘e5; 12 h3 ♘e5 13 f4 ♘ed7 14 ♘c4 ♘b6 15 ♘a3 ♗d7 16 a5 ♘c8 17 ♘c4 ♗b5 =) 12...b5!? 13 axb6 ♘d7 14 ♘a4 ♘xb6 15 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 16 ♘c4 ♕c7 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 = with the idea ...♖b8.

11...♘e4

11...♘h5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7 is very complex and unresolved.

12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 *(D)*



13 ♘d2

Gauglitz-Sandkamp, Solingen 1998 saw 13 ♖a2!? ♗g4!? 14 b3 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♖e8 =.

13...♖b4 14 ♖a2

This simple protection of b2 probably presents Black with the most difficulties. The other move is 14 ♘e4 h6 and now:

a) 15 ♖a2 ♗h3! (15...♗f5!? 16 ♘xd6 ♖xf4 17 ♘xb7 ♕b6 18 gxf4 ♕xb7 with a mess, A.Hoffman-Andres, La Carlota 1995) 16 ♗xh3 ♖xe4 17 a5 ♕c7 18 ♕c2, Adorjan-Armas, Bundesliga 1989/90, and now Armas gives 18...♖d4 19 ♗g2 b5 with an equal position.

b) 15 ♗d2 ♖xb2 16 ♕c1 ♖xd2 17 ♕xd2 f5!? (perhaps just 17...♗xa1!? 18 ♖xa1 ♗f5!?; for example, 19 ♕xh6 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♘d7 21 ♗xg6 fxg6 22 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 23 ♕xd6 ♕f6) 18 ♘c3 ♕a5 19 ♖ac1, Savon-Tal, Dnepropetrovsk 1970. Then 19...♘d7! offers Black a lot of play for his small material deficit.

14...g5 15 ♗e3 f5

Taking on b2 is always met by ♘c4.

16 ♘f3 h6 17 ♕c1

17 b3 has been played; Black should simply develop by 17...♘d7! 18 ♗d2 (18 ♘e1 ♕b6 19 ♗d2 ♖xb3 20 ♗a5 ♖b1!) 18...♖e4 =.

17...♗d7

I think that a new move is needed here, and the text seems better to me than the previously played 17...♕f6 18 h4!, when 18...f4?! 19 ♗d2! favours White, and Kapengut's 18...gxh4 19

♘xh4 ♖xb2 "unclear" is virtually refuted by 20 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 21 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 22 ♗xh6 ±. Black has held on in two games after 18...g4, but White has a definite positional advantage with 19 ♘d2 ♘d7 20 ♘c4 b5 21 axb5.

18 ♕c2

Now 18 h4 is less effective: 18...g4 (messy is 18...♗xa4!? 19 hxg5 ♗b3 20 ♖a3 ♗xd5 21 ♕d2 ♗e4) 19 ♘e1 (maintaining the threat on h6; this time, 19 ♘d2 ♖xa4 gives White insufficient compensation) 19...♕f6 20 a5 ♖xb2 = (or 20...♗b5 =).

After the text-move (18 ♕c2), play might continue 18...♕f6 19 ♗d2 ♖xb2 20 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 21 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 with at least equality, in view of 22 ♖b1 ♗g7 23 ♖xb7 ♗xa4, etc.

The Fianchetto System can be an effective weapon in the hands of a strong player versus an opponent with inferior positional skills. Nevertheless, Black has few problems attaining equality if he knows the theory. The variations with ...a6, ...♘bd7 and ...♖e8 are sound and well-established; they require some skill in complex manoeuvring. The variations with an early ...♖e8 and ...♘e4 (with or without ...a6) have been underestimated, in my opinion; they should be strongly considered by players with tactical inclinations who like a direct solution.

7 Systems with ♗d3 and ♘ge2

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3

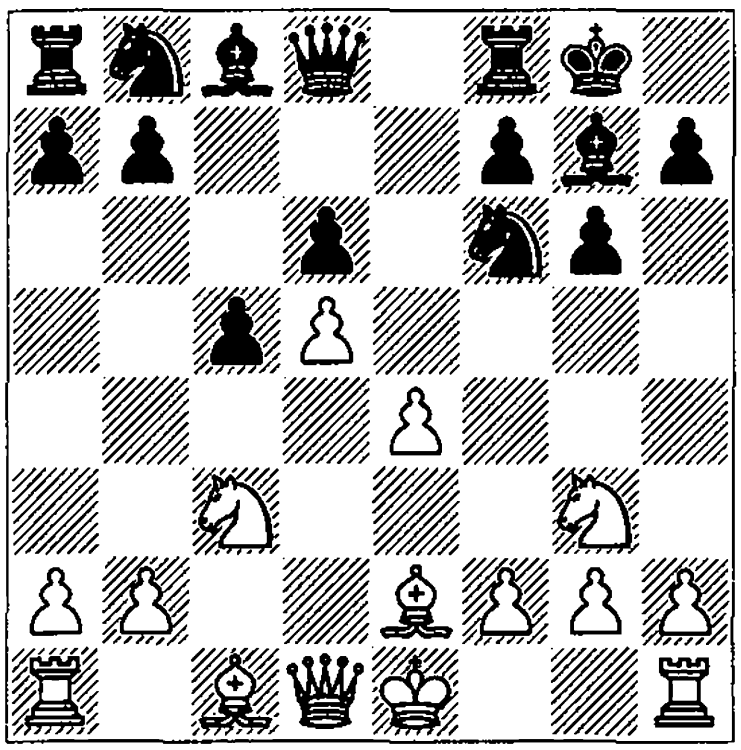
This introduces a very complex and dangerous system involving ♗d3, ♘ge2, 0-0, followed by ♘g3, h3 and f4, along with other ideas such as a well-timed ♗g5. Black has numerous methods of proceeding which are held to be sufficient (see the note to 9 0-0), but theory is very confused here for both sides, with one author suggesting what another rejects. I should mention that Rainer Knaak is a great expert on the white side of this system, and has won several beautiful games with it.

Out of all systems apart from the Taimanov Attack in Chapter 5 and the Modern Main Line in Chapter 9, this is probably the one that is the most intimidating for Black. Essentially, this is due to the fact that White threatens to blow Black off the board on the kingside via e5 and/or f5, and yet keeps a very firm grip on the centre (note the overprotection of the king's pawn by both knights and the d3-bishop). This means that a pawn sacrifice like ...b5 will be futile, since it fails to draw away enough defenders from the centre. White's pieces are also perfectly placed to implement the standard pawn sacrifice '1' e5 dxe5 '2' f5, an idea we saw in Chapter 5. On the other hand, none of White's pieces are aimed at e5, and White's basic set-up requires quite a bit of time to construct (see ♘ge2-g3, f4 and h3). With extra time to initiate counterplay at his disposal, there are features of White's position that give hope to the defender. One is that the move ...c4, supported by ...♕c7, is hard to prevent (the customary transfer ♘d2-c4 is not an option), and it will gain a crucial tempo on the d3-bishop. Then, owing to the lack of support for White's e5 attack, Black's queen knight can rush can rush to occupy c5 and exert influence all over the board. Another sign of hope for Black is that it will take so much time to develop White's pieces that after ...c4, Black's ...b5 will be achieved quickly enough to distract White from the kingside. In this battle of ideas, timing is everything.

Before continuing, let's look at another ♘ge2 system, i.e., 7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗e2 *(D)* (9 ♗d3 is discussed in the note to White's 9th move in the main line).

This position arises from the King's Indian Defence after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘ge2 (the

B



'Kramer System' or 'Hungarian Attack') 5...0-0 6 ♘g3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5. I consider this properly a King's Indian, and indeed analysed it in my book *The Unconventional King's Indian*. It is considered innocuous, as indicated by the fact that White tends to play 9 exd5 in the KID move-order, although that is only equal. Despite *ECO*'s classification of this position as a Benoni, 7 ♘ge2 appears in neither Psakhis nor Schneider. *NCO* relegates it to a short note, and *MCO* doesn't have it at all. I will therefore give only an abbreviated overview of two solid answers:

a) 9...♘a6 10 0-0 (10 h4 is the usual point of this system, but h5 isn't much of a threat: 10...♘c7 11 h5 b5! 12 a4!? {12 ♗xb5 ♘xb5 13 ♘xb5 ♖b8 14 ♘c3 ♗a6 with two bishops and a lot of compensation} 12...b4 13 ♘b1 ♖e8 14 h6 ♗h8 15 ♗g5 ♗a6! 16 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 17 ♕f3 ♕e7 {or 17...c4} 18 ♘d2 ♕e5 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 ∓ F.Portisch-Timman, Vilnius 1969) and now:

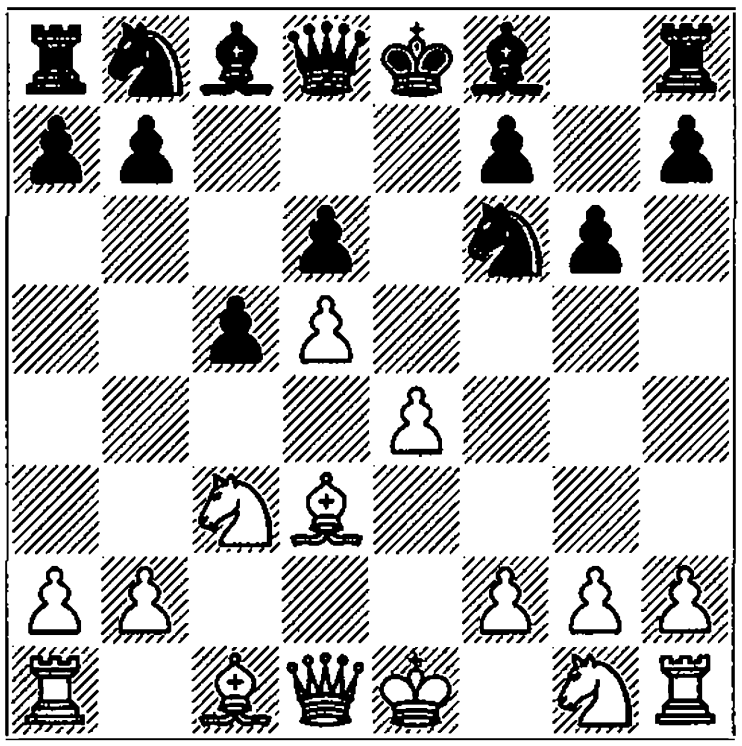
a1) 10...♘c7 11 a4 ♖b8 12 ♖b1. This prepares to answer ...b5 with b4. In the game Szabo-Borik, Dortmund 1974, 12...b6!? 13 ♗f4 ♖e8 14 ♕d2 ♗a6 led to equality. But more consistent is 12...a6 13 ♗f4 b5 14 axb5 ♘xb5 (or 14...axb5 15 b4 cxb4 16 ♖xb4 ♘h5! =) 15 ♘xb5 axb5 16 b4 c4 with equality. White's knight is three moves from d4, and Black can capture the a-file.

a2) 10...♖e8 11 ♗f4 ♘c7 12 a4 ♖b8 13 ♕d2 a6 14 ♗h6 ('!' Forintos and Haag) 14...b5 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 axb5 axb5, Hanks-Kraidman, Griesskirchen 1988, and now Forintos gives 17 ♕f4, but among other moves, Black has 17...♖e5!? (this protects d6 and threatens ...g5 with ...b4, when a centre pawn falls) 18 f3 (18 ♖a7? b4 19 ♘b1 g5 20 ♕f3 ♗g4 21 ♕d3 ♗xe2 22 ♕xe2 ♘cxd5) 18...♗d7 =, when moves like ...b4 and ...♘b5 or ...♗b5 can follow.

b) 9...a6 (best according to Forintos) 10 a4 ♘bd7 is also solid: 11 0-0 ♖e8 (11...h5 12 ♗g5 ♖e8 13 ♕d2 ♕a5! 14 ♖ad1 ♕b4 15 ♕c1 c4 16 f4 ♘c5 ∓ Jakab-Yu Mingyuan, Budapest 2000) 12 ♗f4 (12 ♔h1 ♖b8 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 h5 15 ♗g5 ♕b6 16 ♕d2 ♘h7 = Garmendez-Browne, Linares (Mexico) 1992; 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 = Shemeakin-Moskalenko, Yalta 1995) 12...h5! 13 ♗g5 (13 ♗xd6 h4 14 ♘h1 ♕b6 ∓) 13...♕a5! (13...♘f8 14 f3 ♘8h7 = has also been played) 14 ♕d2 ♘h7 15 ♗h4 ♕b4 16 ♖ad1 ♘e5 (16...♘b6!) 17 ♔h1 ♘c4 18 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 with two bishops and activity, Jakab-Malada, Budapest 2000.

We now return to the position after 7 ♗d3 *(D)*:

B



7...♗g7

7...a6 8 a4 ♕c7!? (or 8...♕a5!? 9 ♗d2 ♕c7) is an attempt to avoid the transposition given in the next note. The idea is to play a system with an early ...c4; e.g., 9 h3 (9 ♘f3 ♗g4) 9...♘bd7 10 ♘f3 c4!?. Black would probably have to sacrifice the c-pawn for activity in some lines. This doesn't really appeal to me, but it could be investigated. See the next note.

8 ♘ge2

Here the only serious alternative is 8 h3 (8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 h3 is analysed in the next note), which introduces another move-order issue that has been ignored by theoreticians. Now Black has no sound way to avoid the Modern Main Line (Chapter 9) which results from 8...0-0 9 ♘f3. Although I've never seen White actually play 8 h3 and 9 ♘f3 in this position, one should be aware of the possibility.

Of course, those who wait for White to play ♘f3 before going in for the Benoni don't have to worry about any of the variations analysed in this chapter.

The only other independent move after 8 h3 0-0 is 9 ♗g5, to which Black may respond by 9...h6 10 ♗e3 (10 ♗h4 ♗d7!? 11 a4 ♘a6 12 ♘f3 ♕b6 13 ♕d2 ♘b4 14 0-0 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 g5 16 ♗g3 ♘h5 is analysis by Goldin; Black has ideas of ...f5! and ...♕xb2) 10...♖e8 11 ♘ge2 (11 ♘f3 c4!? {11...a6 12 a4 ♘bd7 is seen more often} 12 ♗c2 b5) 11...♘bd7 12 ♘g3 a6 13 a4 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 (14 ♗c2 ♘c4) 14...♘h7 15 0-0 ♕h4 and now, instead of 16 ♘h1?! (Yermolinsky-Sherzer, USA Ch (Durango) 1992) 16...f5 ∓, Yermolinsky suggests that 16 ♕e1 f5 17 f4 ♘f7 is unclear. See also 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 ♗g5 (note 'b' to White's 9th move).

8...0-0 *(D)*

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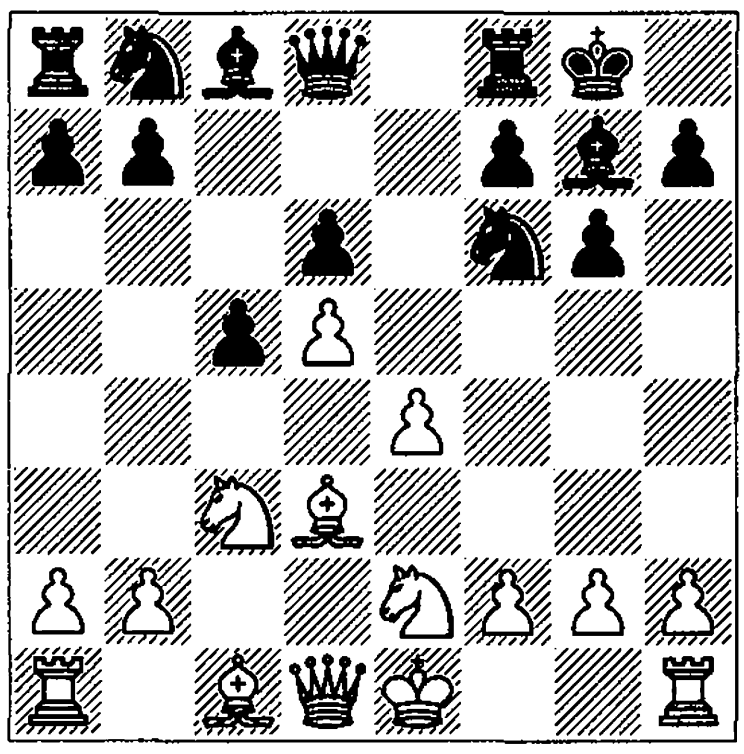

9 0-0

Now 9 ♘g3 will usually transpose, but unnecessarily allows Black options like 9...a6 10 a4 ♘g4!?, intending 11 h3 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♕h4! or 11 f3 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♕h4. Others:

a) 9 f3 transposes to a fairly harmless line which will be dealt with in the next chapter (Line A).

b) 9 ♗g5 used to be played frequently, but has several good answers:

b1) Note that after 9...a6 10 a4, 10...♘bd7 11 0-0 transposes to note 'c' to White's 11th move in Line A, and 10...♖e8 is another route, since 11 f4?! ♕a5 12 0-0 ♘g4! threatens ...c4, Szaraz-Lukac, Slovakian Cht 1995.

b2) Another solution is 9...h6 10 ♗f4 (after 10 ♗h4, 10...♘bd7 is regarded as equal, but also interesting is 10...a6 11 a4 ♕a5 12 f3 ♘bd7 13 0-0 ♘e5 = Sliwa-Bertok, Krakow 1959) 10...a6 (Kapengut likes 10...b6) 11 a4 ♕c7 12 ♕d2 ♔h7 13 f3 ♘bd7 14 0-0 ♘e5!? (Schneider), when 15 ♗xe5 dxe5 16 ♗c4 ♘e8 with the idea ...♘d6 is at least equal.

c) 9 h3 is an interesting possibility. It does prevent the 9...♘g4 system (see Line B), but in several lines it commits White to h3 before he'd like. White's problem is that, as Psakhis points out, f3 is the ideal answer to a number of set-ups involving ...♖e8 and/or ...♘a6. Having forfeited that option (h3 does not go with f3), White not only allows the main lines we discuss below (e.g., 9...♖e8 10 0-0 a6 11 a4 ♕c7), but he also opens the way for several other promising plans for Black. At least one of these is important for Black to look at if his repertoire depends upon 9 0-0 ♘g4 (Line B). The key position arises after 9 h3 ♖e8 10 0-0 *(D)*:

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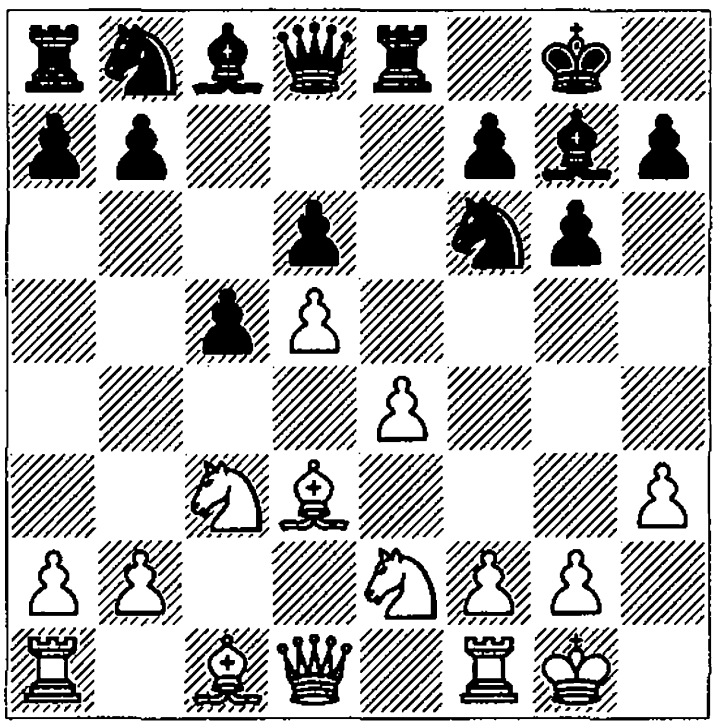


Now 10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 transposes to the note to Black's 11th move in Line A. Independent ideas:

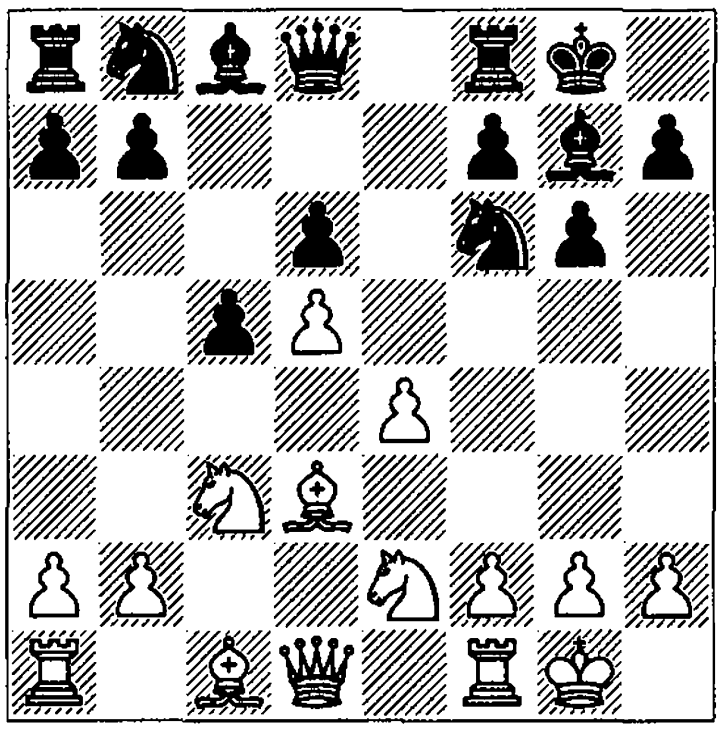
c1) 10...♘a6 11 ♘g3 ♖b8 (here 11...♘c7 12 a4 a6 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♖b8 is a main line from the 9 0-0 ♘a6 variation, considered equal; see, e.g., Kapengut) 12 a4 ♘b4 13 ♗b1 (13 ♗c4 ♘d7! 14 f4 ♕h4! Kapengut) 13...a6 14 f4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♕f3 ♗b7 = 17 f5? ♘d7! 18 fxg6 fxg6 19 ♕f7+ ♔h8 20 ♘xb5 ♘e5 21 ♕c7 ♗a6 ∓ Aaron-Stein, Stockholm IZ 1962.

c2) 10...c4!? has done well in limited tests: 11 ♗c2 ♗d7 (11...b5!? 12 a3 a6 13 ♗e3 ♘bd7 14 ♘d4 ♗b7 15 ♕d2 ♕c7 "with chances for both sides" – Schneider; this looks OK) 12 a4 ♘a6 13 ♗g5 ♘c5 14 f4 b5!? (14..h6 15 ♗h4 ♕c7; 14...♕b6!?) 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 axb5 ♕b6 17 ♔h1 ♗xb5 18 ♘g3 ♗d7 19 ♖b1 ♖ab8, Nikolac-Ljubojević, Zagreb 1975, is assessed as somewhere between = and ∓ by Schneider, which seems fair.

c3) 10...♗d7!? transposes to a theoretical line which normally begins 9 0-0 ♗d7: 11 ♗g5 (11 ♘g3 ♘a6; 11 ♗f4 b5!? 12 ♗xd6 b4; 11 a4 c4 12 ♗c2 transposes to line 'c2') 11...♕c7 12 ♕d2 c4 13 ♗c2 b5 14 a3 ♘a6 15 ♘g3 b4 = Spassky-Ljubojević, Manila IZ 1976.

We now return to 9 0-0 *(D)*:

B



This is the critical position for the ♗d3/♘ge2 variation. Years of practice demonstrate that Black has sufficient play here, but this is difficult to demonstrate without a great deal of specific analysis. In my opinion (and that of theory), both 9...♘a6 and 9...a6 ultimately equalize for Black. The extensive theory on these two moves precludes a detailed exposition of both. I've chosen 9...a6 since it is the more dynamic line, and also because I have in general suggested more ...a6/...♘bd7 lines than ...♘a6 lines in this book, so that gives us some thematic consistency. For the record, Kapengut thinks that the rare 9...♗d7 also equalizes, and he provides the most thorough analysis of any theorist on that move. I should warn that none of these responses is easy, and White has serious attacking chances in every line.

Finally, as a second system, I have chosen the adventurous 9...♘g4, which is more fun and requires much less study than 9...a6.

Thus:

A: 9...a6 134
B: 9...♘g4 142

Line A also features a discussion of the alternative move-orders 9...♖e8 and 9...♘bd7.

A)

9...a6

Transpositions abound in this variation. In the two optional move-orders that follow, I will give a few ways to transpose to the main 9...a6 variations, without many details. This is done so that you may avoid certain side-variations (but accept others) on the way to the main line.

a) 9...♖e8 and now:

a1) 10 f4?! c4 11 ♗c2 ♘g4 ∓ and Black threatens ...♕b6+ (Kapengut).

a2) 10 h3 transposes to note 'c' to White's 9th move above.

a3) 10 ♘g3 a6 (or 10...♘bd7 intending to meet 11 ♗f4 with 11...♘e5 12 ♗b5 ♘fd7 13 a4 a6 14 ♗e2 h5! 15 ♖e1 h4 is equal – Kapengut) 11 a4 ♘bd7 and again we are in the main line.

a4) 10 f3 is Psakhis's objection to this move-order, and it's true that ...♖e8 tends to be best when h3 is already in. Nevertheless, Black's game is satisfactory after 10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 (a scheme related to one in Chapter 8) 12 ♔h1 (12 ♖b1 ♕c7 13 ♔h1 c4 14 ♗c2 ♘c5 15 b4 cxb3 16 ♗xb3 ♘fd7 = Spraggett-Reinaldo Castineira, Dos Hermanas 2000; 12 b3 ♕c7 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 =) 12...♖b8! 13 ♖b1 ♕a5 (or 13...♘e5 14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♘fd7 16 ♗c2 ♕a5 = Breedveld-Maus, Bad

Wörishofen 1991; there follows ...♘c5) 14 ♗d2 ♘e5 = Arbakov-A.Kuzmin, Moscow Ch 1989.

b) 9...♘bd7 also does the trick; e.g.:

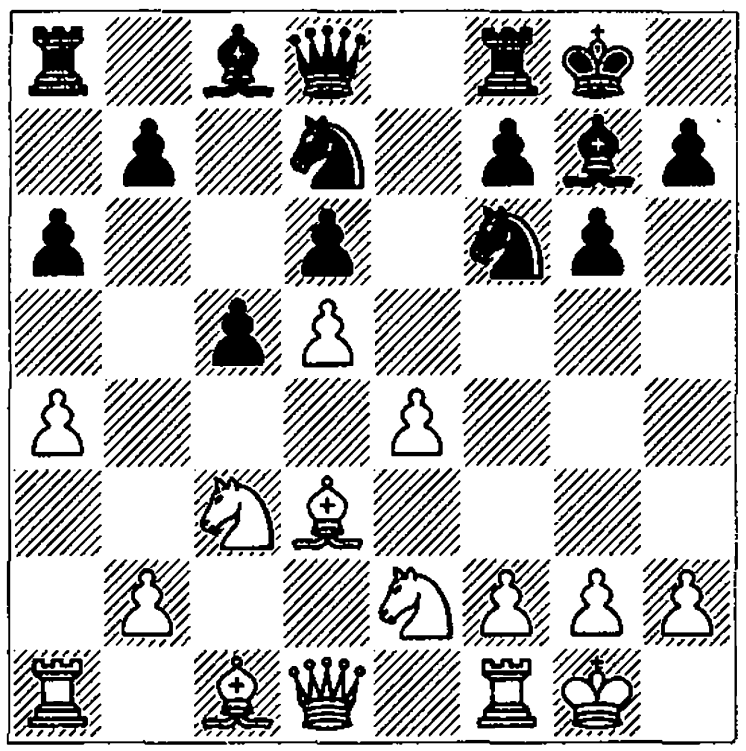
b1) 10 ♗f4 is met by 10...♕e7.

b2) After 10 a4, 10...a6 transposes to the main line, while 10...♘g4!? is effectively a tempo up on Line B (9...♘g4), with the extra move ...♘bd7. The move 10 a4 weakens b3, as shown by 10...♘g4 11 h3 ♘ge5 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 f4 ♘c4 14 ♕d3 ♘a5.

b3) Berliner, who advocates ♗d3 and ♘ge2, dismisses the whole idea of playing ...♘bd7 in the main line by giving 10 ♘g3 ♘e5 (a waste of time; of course, 10...a6 11 a4 and 11...♖e8 or 11...♕c7 is normal) 11 ♗e2 here, with the idea f4/e5, referring the reader to "any good book on this opening". As far as I can discover, the completely illogical 10...♘e5? is given only one trivial reference in all of the literature.

b4) 10 h3 ♖e8 11 ♘g3 (11 ♗f4 ♘e5 12 ♗b5 ♗d7 =; 11 a4 a6) 11...a6 12 a4 ♕c7 again transposes to the main line.

10 a4 ♘bd7 *(D)*


W

Or 10...♖e8. But this move-order (10...♘bd7) is more convenient, since Black may want to play ...♖b8 and ...♕c7 before ...♖e8.

11 h3

This is almost always played. 11 ♘g3 is a line of the 5 ♘ge2 variation of the King's Indian which can transpose to the text after 11...♕c7 12 h3, but Black has alternatives; for example, 11...h5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7. Other moves for White:

a) 11 f3 transposes to a variation in the next chapter (see Line A there), where Black has no difficulties.

b) 11 f4 ♕c7 (strange but interesting was 11...♕e7 12 ♘g3 h5 13 h3 ♖b8 14 ♖e1 h4 15 ♘f1 ♘h5! with double-edged play, Rusjan-Soln, Slovenian U-16 Ch 1992) 12 ♘g3 ♖e8 (12...c4 13 ♗c2 ♖b8 is also played), and here are some abbreviated lines in which White tries to skip h3:

b1) 13 ♕f3 c4 14 ♗c2 ♖b8 15 e5!? dxe5 16 f5 e4 (16...♖f8!? 17 ♗e3 ♘c5 intending ...♘d3 – Kapengut) 17 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 (18 ♘xe4 ♘e5) 18...♘e5; for example, 19 ♕g3 gxf5 20 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 21 ♖xf5 ♘d3! with a large advantage (22 ♕xc7?? ♖e1+ is a mate in six).

b2) 13 ♔h1 c4 (or 13...♖b8 =) 14 ♗c2 ♘c5!? 15 ♕e2 (15 ♗e3 ♘cxe4 16 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 f5 ∓) 15...♗d7 (15...♘b3!?) 16 ♕xc4 b5 with good compensation.

b3) 13 ♕e2 ♘b6 (the alternatives 13...♖b8 and 13...♘xe4 14 ♘cxe4 f5 have also equalized) 14 f5!? c4 15 ♗b1 ♘bxd5 16 ♕f3 ♘xc3 17 bxc3,

Ligterink-Payrhuber, Groningen jr Ech 1968/9, and it's hard to believe that White has enough after Kapengut's suggestion 17...♗d7 18 ♗g5 ♖f8.

c) 11 ♗g5 ♖e8 (11...♕c7, with the idea ...c4, is also good) 12 ♘g3 (12 ♔h1 ♕c7 13 ♕d2 ♖b8 14 ♖ac1 c4 15 ♗c2 b5, and Black's queenside play was well underway in Razuvaev-Psakhis, USSR Ch (Vilnius) 1981) 12...h6 13 ♗f4 ♘e5 (13...♕c7 14 ♕c1!? h5! – Gelfand and Kapengut) 14 ♗e2 ♗d7 15 h3 g5!? 16 ♗xe5 (16 ♗e3?! g4 17 hxg4 ♘fxg4 with an attack – Gelfand and Psakhis; a sample line would be 18 ♗f4 ♕h4 19 ♘f5 ♗xf5 20 exf5 ♕h5 21 ♕c2 c4! 22 ♖fe1! ♘d3 23 ♗xd3 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 cxd3 25 ♕xd3 ♕h1+! with a small edge) 16...♖xe5 17 ♕d2 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 20 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 21 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 22 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♘xd6 ♖d4 24 ♕c2 ♕xd5 25 ♘f5 ♖d2 26 ♕c1 ♖e2 27 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 28 ♕c3+ ½-½ Yusupov-Kasparov, USSR 1980.

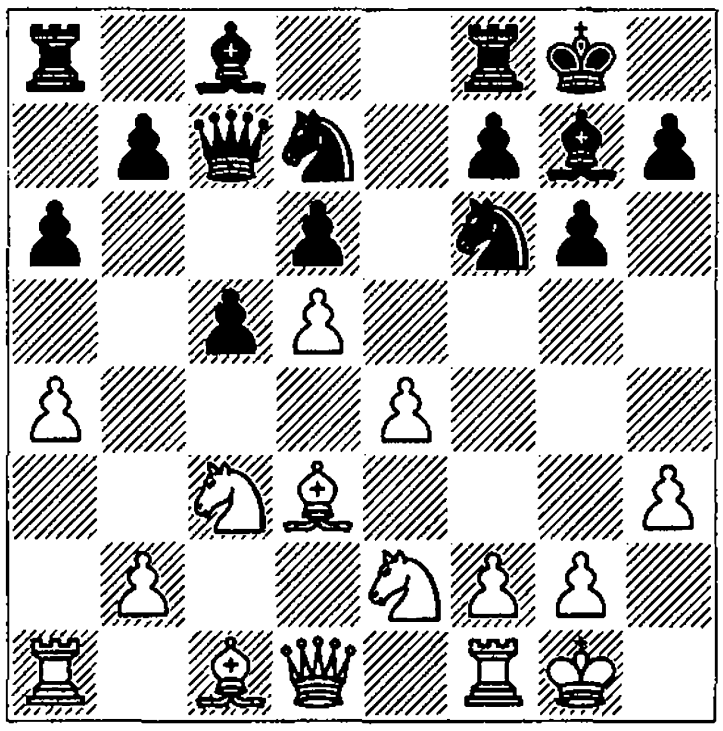
Thus, White achieves nothing special by omitting h3.

11...♕c7 *(D)*

This is the preferred move-order of most books, although 11...♖e8 will usually transpose. In that case, ...♕c7 might sometimes be omitted, as in 12 f4 (12 ♘g3 ♖b8 13 ♗g5 ♕c7 14 ♖c1 c4 15 ♗e2 b5 with chances for both sides, Christiansen-Bu Xiangzhi, Reykjavik 2000) 12...♕a5!? 13 ♗d2 c4 14 ♗c2 ♖b8 = Phillips-Reinhard, Hamburg 1993. This could be a nice back-up idea.

12 ♘g3

Independent ideas:



a) 12 ♗e3 ♖b8 13 f4 ♖e8 14 ♕e1!? c4 15 ♗c2 ♘c5 16 ♘g3 b5! 17 axb5 axb5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♗f4 and now Black eventually won after the promising exchange sacrifice 20...♘fd7 in Baginskaite-Z.Ilić, San Francisco 2000, but 20...♖xe1 21 ♗xc7 ♖xf1+ 22 ♘xf1 ♖b7 ∓ is easier.

b) 12 b3 ♖e8 13 ♖b1 ♘e5 14 ♗c2 c4 15 f3 (15 b4 ♘d3 16 ♗xd3 cxd3 17 ♕xd3 ♘xe4! 18 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♗f5 20 ♕h4 ♗xb1 is equal), Zhukhovitsky-Kopylov, Erevan 1981, and now 15...cxb3!? 16 ♗xb3 ♗d7 (alternatively, 16...♕c5+ 17 ♔h1 b5 =) 17 ♗e3 b5 = Kapengut.

c) 12 ♗g5 (this move is seldom promising in the ...a6 line) 12...♖b8 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♖xb6 with an equal position.

d) After 12 f4, 12...♖e8 13 ♘g3 transposes to the main line, while 12...c4 13 ♗c2 ♘c5 is an effective alternative.

12...♖e8

For those who are less theoretically inclined, 12...♖b8 has a decent reputation:

a) 13 f4 c4 14 ♗c2 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗e3 b4 17 ♖a7 ♕d8 is fine for Black.

b) 13 ♕e2 ♖e8 14 ♗e3 h5 15 f4 c4 16 ♗c2 h4 17 ♘h1 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖a7 ♕d8 leaves White's centre exposed down the e-file, giving Black time for 20 ♕f3 b4 21 ♘e2 ♖b7 with a good game.

c) The best move is 13 ♗e3. Then 13...♖e8 14 f4 c4 15 ♗c2 transposes to the main line, or Black can vary with 13...c4 14 ♗c2 b5 (14...♖e8? 15 ♗a7 ♖a8 16 ♗d4 ±) 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖a7 ♕d8. Then 17 f4 ♖e8 transposes to the note to Black's 15th move, but probably 17 ♘ce2 intending ♘d4 favours White instead.

13 f4!?

This gives White some options on the 15th move, but if those don't appeal, then 13 ♗e3 is better, because in that case, 13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♘c5 15 ♗d4 ♖b8 16 f4 transposes to Line A2, and 13...♖b8 14 f4 c4 15 ♗c2 transposes to the main line. So 13 ♗e3 avoids the limitations expressed in the note to Black's 14th move below.

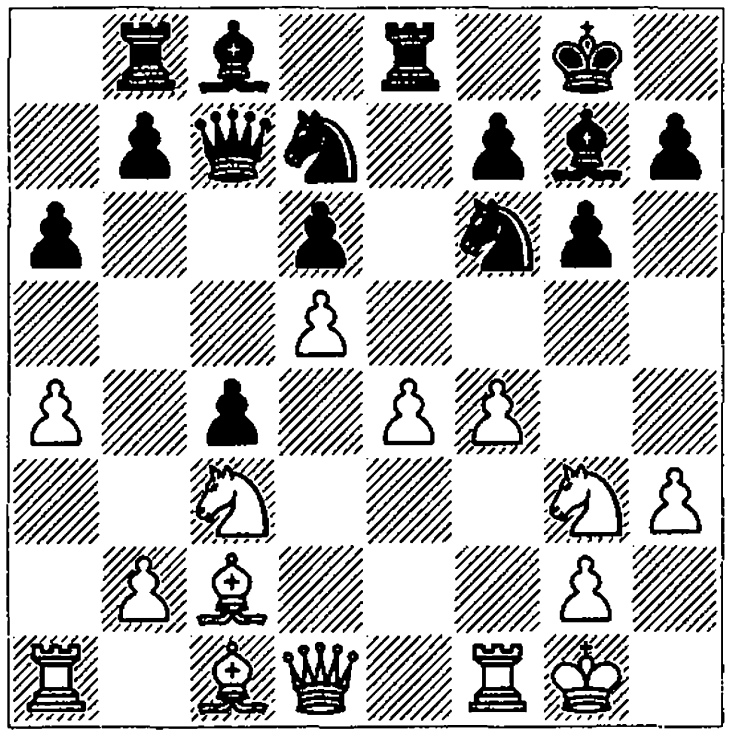
13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♖b8 *(D)*

After 14...♘c5!? 15 ♕f3 ♖b8, 16 ♗e3 transposes to Line A1 (16 ♕f3), but notice that Black has bypassed the important Line A2 (16 ♗d4).

15 ♗e3

Or:

a) 15 ♔h1 aims at e5: 15...♘c5 16 e5!? dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘fd7 18 d6 ♕c6 19 ♘h5!? (19 ♘d5 ♘xe5 20 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 21 dxe7 ♘cd3 with compensation) 19...b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘xg7 ♗b7! 22 ♕d2 ♔xg7 and Black has a slight



advantage, Zakharov-Psakhis, Volgograd 1977.

b) 15 ♕f3 b5 (15...♘c5!? 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♗f4 ♘fd7 is playable and obscure) 16 axb5 axb5 17 e5 dxe5 18 f5 e4! Kapengut. Then there could follow 19 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘e5 21 ♕g3 ♗xf5 22 ♖xf5 gxf5 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 =. White's d-pawn can be weak, and Black is active, compensating for the bishops.

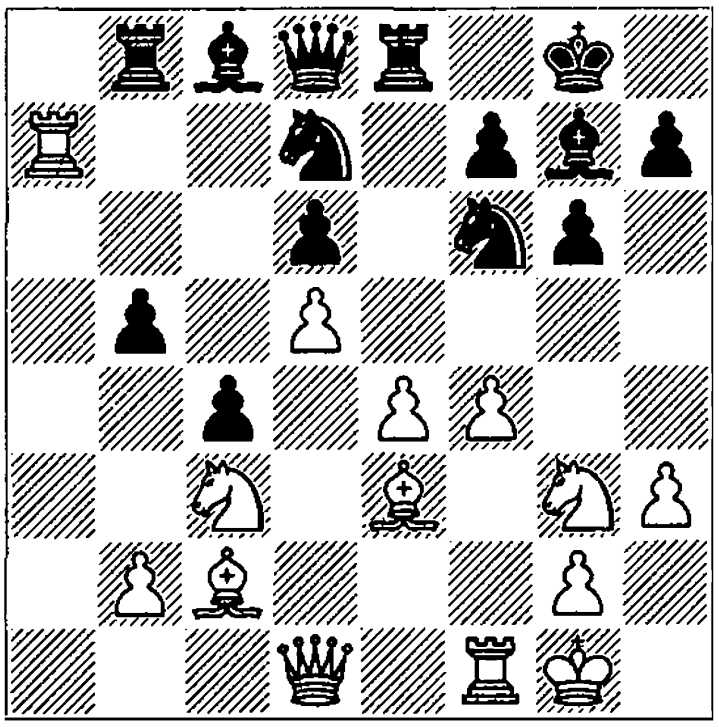
15...♘c5

The best move, in my opinion. If you need an alternative, I think that 15...b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a7 ♕d8 *(D)* may also be adequate.

Here's an overview of the three most dangerous lines:

a) 18 ♕d2 b4 19 ♘a4 ♗b7 (19...h5 20 e5!? dxe5 21 f5 e4! is unclear) 20 ♗f2 (20 ♕xb4 ♘xd5) 20...♗a8 21 ♗b1 h5 22 e5 dxe5 23 f5 e4 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 ♗d4 ♗xd5! (Knaak described this as "leading by force to a lost position") 26 ♖xd7! ♕xd7 27 ♗xf6 e3 28 ♕c2, Knaak-Balashov, Leipzig 1973, and now *Fritz* finds 28...e2! 29 ♘xe2

W



(29 ♕xg6 exf1♕+ 30 ♘xf1 ♕a7+ 31 ♔h1 ♖e2 32 ♕h7+ ♔f8 –+) 29...♕a7+ 30 ♘d4 (30 ♔h2 ♕f7) 30...♖e4 31 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 with a clear advantage for Black.

b) 18 e5 dxe5 19 f5 ♗b7 (another idea is 19...♖b7!?) 20 ♘ge4 and now Kapengut proposes 20...b4!?. His line continued 21 ♘b5(?), but then 21...♘xe4! 22 ♗xe4 ♘f6 is just winning for Black. 21 ♘d6 is better, although 21...♗a8!? 22 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 23 ♘e4 ♘xd5 seems to give Black sufficient compensation.

c) 18 ♕f3, and while theory recommends 18...b4, I think that simply 18...♕e7!? is attractive as well; for example, 19 ♖c1 (19 ♗d4? ♘xe4 20 ♗xg7 ♘d2; 19 ♘ge2 b4 20 ♘d4! ♗b7!; 19 ♖d1 b4 20 ♘ce2 ♗b7 21 ♗d4 h5!?) 19...b4 20 ♘d1 (20 ♘ce2 ♘xd5!) 20...♖b7 21 ♖a6 ♖c7 with equality.

After the text-move (15...♘c5), there are two wild variations, both extremely dangerous (for both sides!):

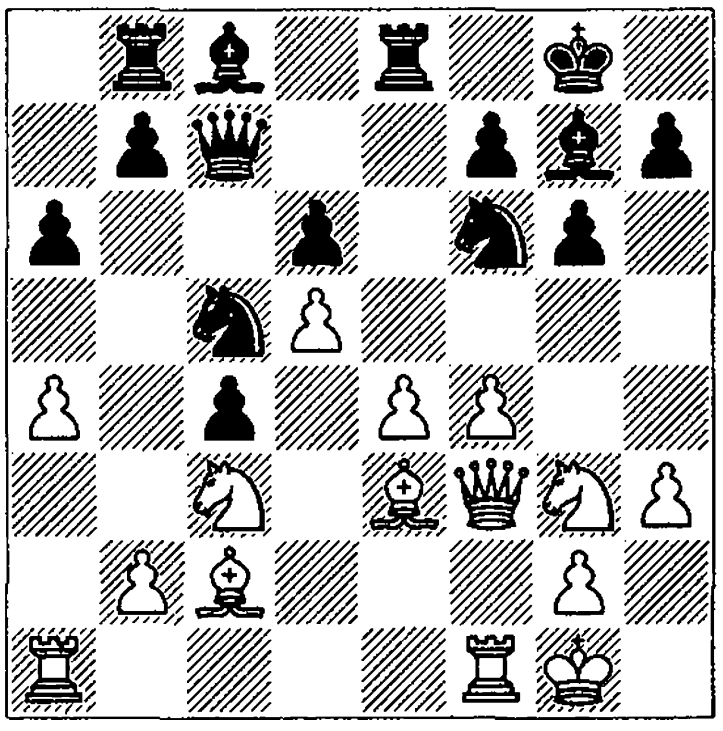
A1: 16 ♕f3 138
A2: 16 ♗d4 140

I don't know if anyone has suggested 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5. Probably the centre is too exposed after 17...♘fd7 (or 17...♖xe5!? 18 ♗f4 ♘fd7 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 20 d6!? ♕d8, a standard type of exchange sacrifice for a pawn, with one knight going to d3 and moves like ...♗e6 and ...♕h4 in the air; this is probably just sufficient compensation, but it would be hard to play White) 18 d6 (18 e6 fxe6 19 d6 ♕d8) 18...♕c6 (or 18...♕d8 19 ♕d5 ♘e6 20 ♕xc4 ♗xe5, which can only be considered a mess) 19 ♘d5 ♘xe5 20 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 21 dxe7 ♗d7, again with typical compensation in the form of activity and prospects of gathering up the e-pawn.

A1)

16 ♕f3 *(D)*

B



The move approved by most theoreticians. It is reasonably well worked out, but both sides need some new ideas, which I hope I've supplied.

16...b5

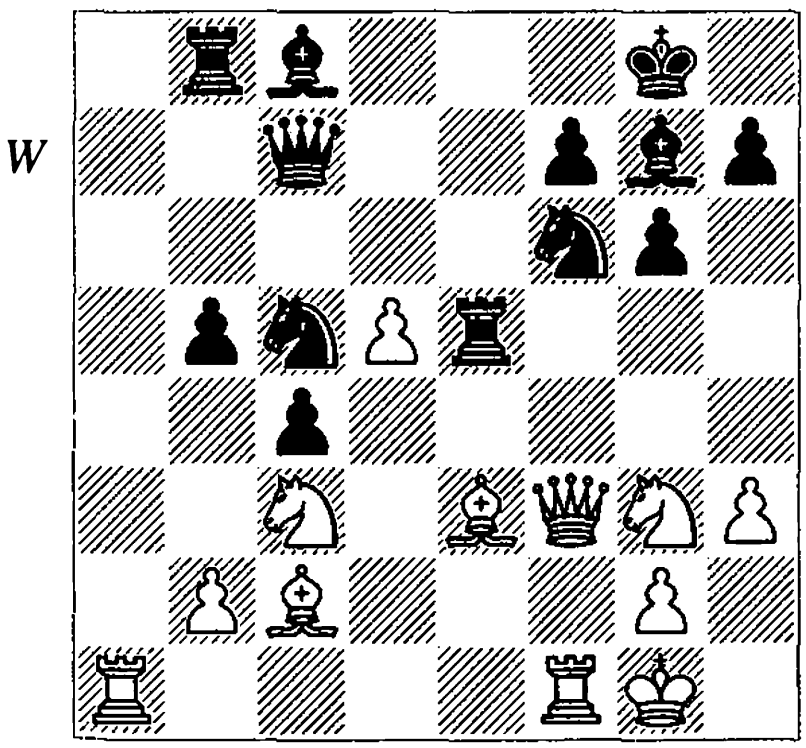
The famous encounter Penrose-Tal, Leipzig OL 1960 illustrates the sort of

position I'd like to avoid: 16...♘fd7 17 ♕f2!? b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 e5! dxe5 (not much better was the recent 19...b4 20 ♘ce4 ♘xe4 21 ♘xe4 dxe5 22 f5 of Salas-Lie, Istanbul OL 2000) 20 f5 ♗b7 21 ♖ad1 ♗a8 22 ♘ce4 ±. I cannot emphasize enough how easy it is to allow this manoeuvre, which underlies so much of White's strategy in this system.

17 axb5 axb5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5

Ineffective is 19 f5 e4! 20 ♕f2 (or 20 ♘gxe4 ♘cxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘xd5!) 20...♘d3 21 ♗xd3 cxd3. This looks good for Black, in view of 22 ♗f4 ♕b6 23 ♗e3 (23 ♗xb8? e3! ∓) 23...♕d8 24 fxg6 fxg6 intending to meet 25 ♗g5?! with 25...e3!.

19...♖xe5 *(D)*



20 ♗d4

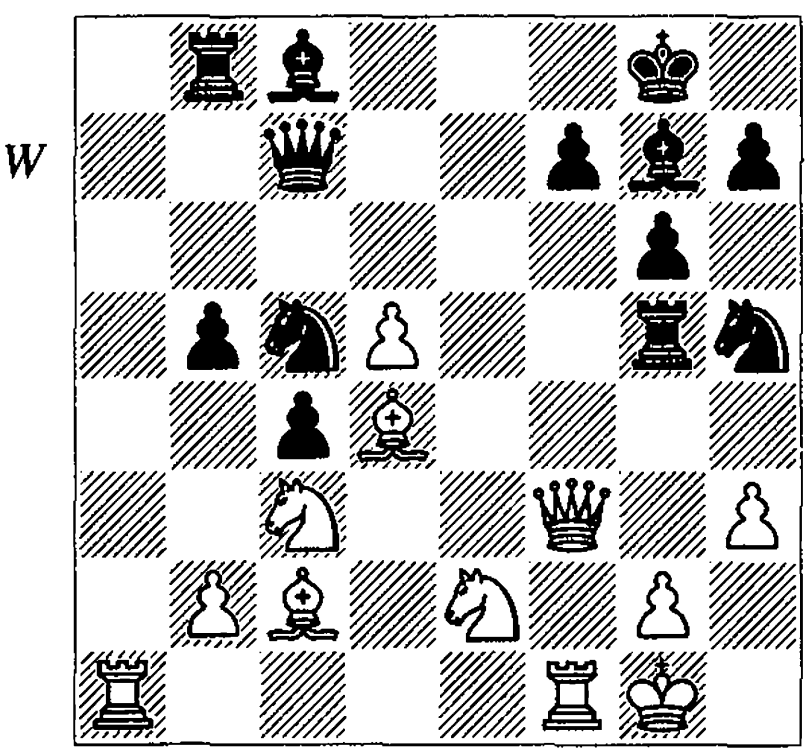
20 ♗f4!? is seldom seen: 20...b4 (Kapengut proposes instead 20...♘fd7 21 ♗xe5 ♘xe5! with compensation) 21 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖ae1 ♕d4+ 23 ♔h1 ♗xh3!? 24 ♘ce4! (a clear improvement upon 24 ♘ce2? ♕xb2 25 ♕f4 ♖c8 ∓ Kasparov-Rachels, New York simul 1988) 24...♘fxe4! (I think that this is better than 24...♘cxe4?! 25 ♘xe4 ♗f5 26 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 27 ♕f4 ♖c8 28 d6 ♖d8, Cording-Lobron, Bundesliga 1981/2, when 29 ♗xf5! gxf5 30 ♖d1 is in White's favour) 25 ♕xf7+ (25 ♘xe4 ♗f5!) 25...♔h8 26 ♘xe4 (26 ♗xe4 ♗d7 ∓) 26...♗f5 27 ♘f2! (27 ♘g5 ♕h4+ 28 ♘h3 ♘e4) 27...♗d7 28 ♘e4 ♗f5 = (or 28...♗b5!?).

20...♖g5 21 ♘ge2!

Other tries such as 21 ♘ge4? ♘cxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♘g4 −+ Timman-Ljubojević, Amsterdam 1975 have failed here. The only real alternative to the text-move is 21 ♕f2 ♖xg3?! (Kapengut's 21...♗xh3! looks very strong) 22 d6 ♕xd6 23 ♗xc5, Paulsen-Kettner, Bundesliga 1986/7, and now 23...♖xg2+! 24 ♔xg2 ♗b7+ 25 ♔g1 ♕c6 26 ♔h2 ♘d7! would still favour Black.

21...♘h5! *(D)*

Kapengut's main line is 21...♗f5!? 22 ♕e3 ♗h6, but I don't fully trust it.



22 ♗xg7

Alternatives are messy but fine for Black:

a) 22 ♗e3 is untried; some ideas: 22...♖e5 23 g4 (23 d6 ♕d7 24 ♗d4 ♗b7 ∓; 23 ♘d4 ♘d3!? 24 ♘dxb5 {24 ♘cxb5 ♕d7! 25 g4 ♕xd5!; 24 ♗xd3 cxd3 25 ♘dxb5 ♕e7 26 ♗a7 ♖b7 27 g4 d2!} 24...♕e7! 25 ♗a7 ♖f5 ∓) 23...b4 24 gxh5?! (24 ♘d1 ♘f6 25 ♗f4 ♗b7!) 24...bxc3 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 bxc3 ♖b2 ∓.

b) 22 d6 ♕d7 23 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 24 ♘f4 (24 ♕e3? f6 25 ♖ad1 ♗b7! –+; 24 ♘d5 ♗b7 25 ♕c3+ f6 26 ♘df4 ♘xf4 27 ♘xf4 ♕xd6 and Black wins, Heiling-Kreuzer, Germany tt 1993/4) 24...♘g3! ∓ (24...♕xd6 25 ♘xh5+ ♖xh5 26 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 =) 25 ♘fd5 (25 ♘cd5? ♕xd6 26 ♕c3+ ♕e5; 25 ♖fd1 ♗b7) 25...♘xf1 26 ♕f6+ ♔h6! and Black has a clear advantage, Tomaszewski-Panczyk, Polish Ch 1986.

22...♔xg7 23 d6 ♕xd6

This is how the original game with this line went. Kapengut suggests 23...♕b7!? instead.

24 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 25 ♖ad1

Inferior is 25 ♖fd1 ♕f6 ∓. 25 ♕f8+ ♕xf8 26 ♖xf8 b4 27 ♘e4 ♖e5 is a bit chaotic, but good for Black.

25...♘d3!

I think that this is a big improvement over Knaak-Enders, East Germany 1982, which went 25...♕e5? 26 h4!. Actually, I think that Knaak's own idea of 25...♕c6 ("unclear") also looks good; e.g., 26 ♕f8+ (26 g4 ♗b7) 26...♘g7 27 ♖f2 (27 ♖d5 ♘ce6!) 27...♘ce6 28 ♕f7 ♕c7!? 29 ♘e4 ♖f5 30 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 ∓.

After the text-move (25...♘d3!), play might continue 26 ♘e4 (what else? Both ...♗xh3 and ...♗b7 were threatened, and this time 26 ♕f8+? fails to 26...♕xf8 27 ♖xf8 ♗xh3!) 26...♕b6+ 27 ♔h1 ♖f5 28 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 and Black has an obvious advantage.

It is so difficult to break down the Benoni by direct attack as long as Black stays aggressive!

A2)

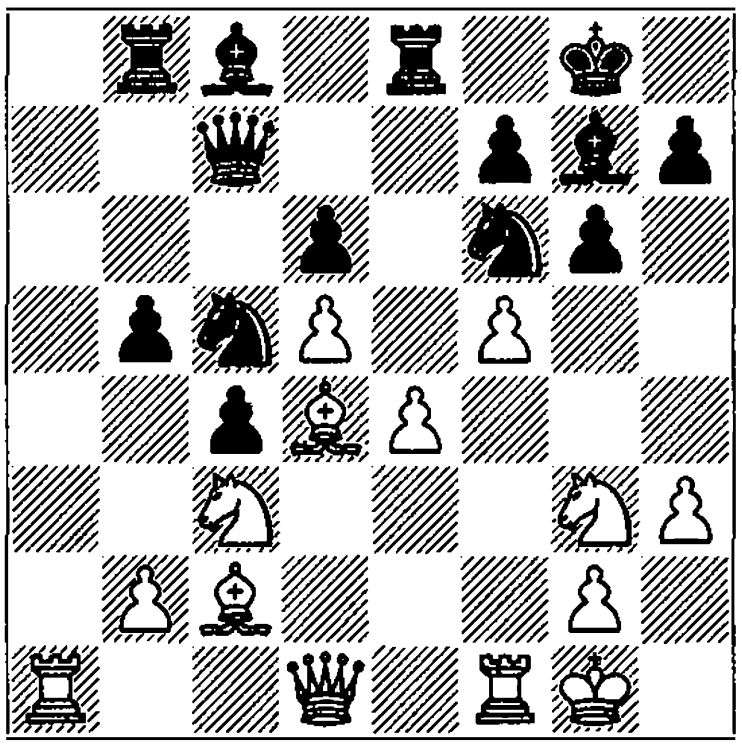
16 ♗d4

This is yet another menacing move which threatens to cast Black's game into doubt. And here too, Black's play needs patching up. Still, in the end I think he is doing well:

16...b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 f5 *(D)*

Given '!' by most theoreticians. 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♕f3 transposes to Line A1.

B



18...♖f8!

I completely disagree with theory here, as I think that there are two playable moves, neither of which is the one claimed to be best. The maligned text-move is quite sound, in my opinion, and I will offer another intriguing idea for back-up:

a) 18...g5?! is the theoretical move. It has some nice games to support it, but I find it very difficult to fight against Knaak's discovery 19 ♕c1! h6 20 h4! b4 (20...gxh4 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♕xh6! ♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 hxg3 24 f6 ♗xf6 25 ♖xf6 +– Knaak; 20...♘h7!? 21 ♗xg7! ♔xg7 22 hxg5 ♘xg5 23 ♘h5+!) 21 hxg5 bxc3 22 bxc3!? (22 gxf6 appears to be even better in view of 22...cxb2 23 ♗xb2 ♕b6 24 ♕d1! – Knaak) 22...♘fxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♗xd4+ 24 cxd4 ♘xe4 25 gxh6 f6, Knaak-Bangiev, German Ch (Bremen) 1998, and now Knaak's 26 ♕e1! ♕h7 27 ♗xe4 still keeps some advantage.

b) 18...♘fd7!? is a move no one mentions, but it is certainly worth examining. I tried a little experiment here. Even with a good deal of time, two analytical engines refused to suggest this move even as a fourth option! Another engine declared it as the second best, but wouldn't promote it, and a fourth one took its time, but then declared 18...♘fd7 the best move! In one of those mysterious twists, every engine liked 18...♘fd7 best (not necessarily correctly) once I had played it for them. At any rate, this is the sort of position one could spend a few days engrossed in. Since 18...♖f8 seems to hold up, I'll just supply some fascinating but incomplete analysis:

b1) 19 fxg6 ♗xd4+ (or 19...hxg6) 20 ♕xd4 hxg6 =. Black can attack on the queenside while defending with moves like ...♘e5 and ...♕e7.

b2) 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕d4+ (20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♕f3 ♘e5 22 ♕f6+ ♔g8 = 23 ♘ce2 b4 24 ♘d4 b3 25 ♗b1 ♘cd7 26 ♕f4 c3!) 20...♘e5 21 f6+ (21 ♕d2 b4 22 ♘ce2 ♘cd3 23 f6+ ♔h8 24 ♗xd3 ♘xd3) 21...♔h8 22 ♕e3 b4 23 ♕h6 ♖g8 =. Black's queenside attack and d3 outpost make up for his cramped kingside; for example, 24 ♘ce2 ♘cd7!, contemplating ...g5 and ...♖g6.

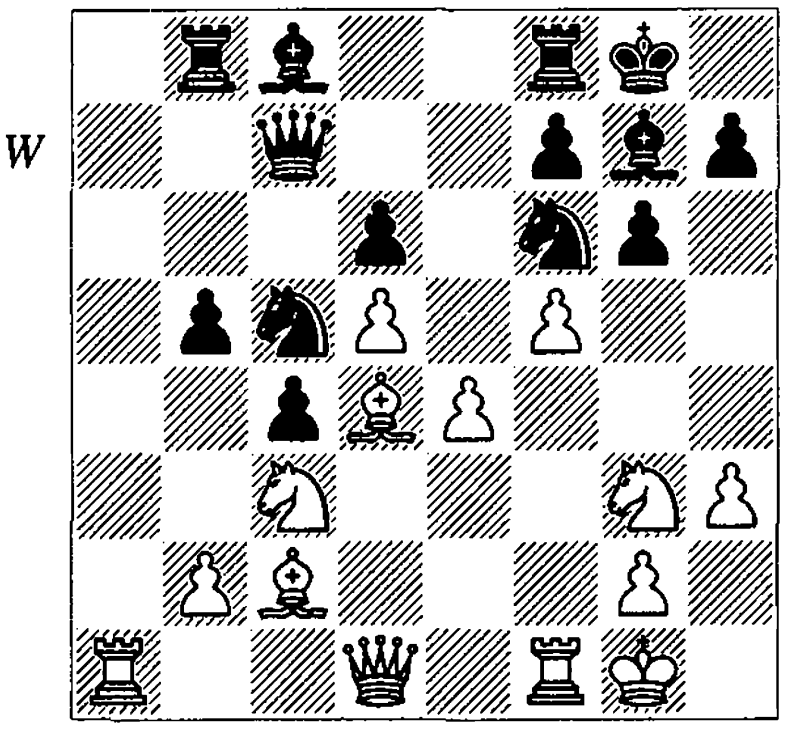
b3) 19 f6 ♗h8 (19...♗f8 is probably safer; e.g., 20 ♕c1 b4 21 ♘ce2 c3 22 b3 ♗a6!?) 20 ♕d2 (20 ♘f5 gxf5 21 ♕h5 ♖e5!? 22 ♕g5+ ♔f8 23 ♕h6+ ♔e8 24 ♕xh7 ♗xf6 25 ♕g8+ ♔e7 ∓) 20...b4 21 ♘ce2 ♘e5 22 ♘f5!? ♗xf5 23 exf5 c3 24 bxc3 b3 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 ♗b1 b2 27 ♖a2 ♘b3 followed by ...♘c4 and/or ...♘xd4.

b4) After 19 ♘ce2, truly compelling play can follow 19...♘e5 (19...b4 is an equally obscure possibility) 20 f6 ♗h8 (20...♗h6!?) 21 ♕d2 ♘cd7 22 ♕g5 ♕d8 23 ♘h5! h6!? (most exciting, but 23...b4 and 23...♗b7 are not so forcing) 24 ♕xh6! gxh5 25 ♖a3! (25 ♕g5+ ♘g6) 25...♘xf6 26 ♖g3+ with beautiful play: 26...♗g4 27 hxg4 hxg4 28 ♗xe5! ♖xe5 29 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 30 ♖xg4+ ♗g5 31 ♘d4 (31 ♘f4 ♕e7 32 ♘h5 f6! with the idea 33 ♘xf6+ ♔f7!) 31...♖b7! 32 ♘f5 (32 ♘c6 ♕b6+ 33 ♔f1 ♕e3! =) 32...♖xf5 33 exf5 f6 34 ♖xg5+! fxg5 35 f6 ♕b6+ 36 ♔h1 ♕e3 =. Thanks to *Hiarcs* and *Fritz* for their kind assistance!

We now return to 18...♖f8 *(D)*:

19 ♕c1

This is the move that was supposed to put 18...♖f8 out of business. Perhaps 19 fxg6 fxg6 20 ♕d2 is objectively better, but Black has no serious difficulties after 20...b4; e.g., 21 ♘a4



b3 (21...♘cd7!?) 22 ♗b1 ♖a8 23 ♗xc5 dxc5 24 d6 ♕a5!, etc.

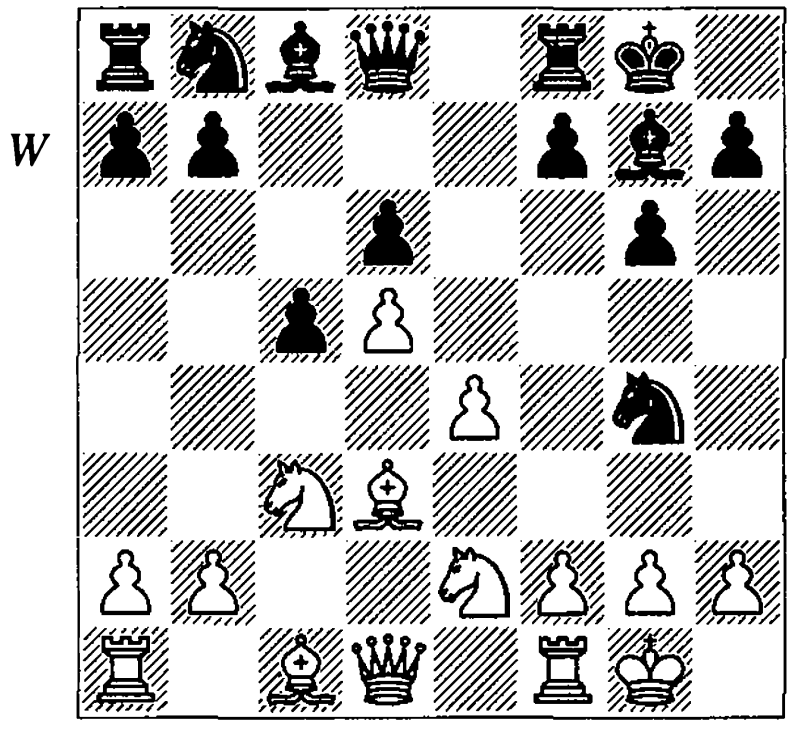
19...b4 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 e5

This move was played in the well-known game Knaak-Teske, East German Ch (Nordhausen) 1986, won in brilliant fashion by White after Black played 21...♗xe5 22 f6! ♗xf6 23 ♖xf6 bxc3 24 ♕h6!. But I think that Black has a real improvement with the unaesthetic but solid 21...dxe5!; e.g., 22 fxg6 (22 ♕h6 ♗g7 23 ♕h4 bxc3 24 f6 ♗h8 25 ♘f5 ♗xf5 26 ♖xf5 ♖xb2 –+; 22 ♘ce4 ♘xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♕b6+ 24 ♔h1 gxf5 25 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6) 22...fxg6 (22...bxc3? 23 ♖xf6 cxb2? 24 ♕h6! mates) 23 ♘ce4 ♘xe4, and Black is at any rate not worse.

Given Black's many alternatives along the way, he needn't enter into the last part of this wild main line (from move 16 on); on the other hand, he seems to have plenty of chances for advantage by doing so. I don't often suggest a theoretical variation that is so horribly convoluted as this one, but the ♗d3/♘ge2 lines are dangerous, and this line promises Black the chance for an advantage. At any rate, one could learn an enormous amount about dynamic chess play by carefully studying these lines.

B)

9...♘g4 *(D)*



Perenyi's relatively obscure move, which Attila Schneider has both played and investigated in some depth. Interestingly, in his thorough monograph on A65 (the code which includes this ♗d3/♘ge2 system), Kapengut assesses 9...♘g4 as 'unclear' in all main and side variations.

What is the point of this move? First of all, against lines with ♘g3, ...♕h4 is a handy way to harass the kingside. If White plays the normal 10 h3, Black plays 10...♘e5, and when White moves his bishop and plays f4, Black will often reply ...♘c4, and finally, when his knight is attacked again, he plays ...♘a5! At first, it may seem absolutely insane to make five moves with the same knight and end up apparently misplaced on the edge

of the board on a5! Yet White himself has played four extra moves, some of them weakening, to force the knight to its new post, and in reality, the knight is often quite useful there. Another way of looking at it is that the knight on f6 is a bit of a 'problem' piece in this line, allowing those e5 and f5 attacks, masking the bishop, and preventing ..f5. Apart from ...♘e8, which can have its own drawbacks, this is one of the only moves which addresses those problems without getting in the way of the rest of Black's development.

All of this doesn't mean that Black stands better by any means, but 9...♘g4 certainly shakes things up and creates interesting counterplay. What's more, the theory of 9...♘g4 is totally unresolved, offering room for fresh ideas and original play.

10 h3

Certainly the main move, but most of the themes of this line are illustrated in the following alternatives:

a) 10 ♘g3 leads to rich play:

a1) 10...a6!? and now:

a11) 11 ♗e2 ♕h4 12 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 13 ♕c2 b5 Schneider. Then 14 ♗f4 ♕e7 15 f3 ♗c8!? 16 a4 b4 with ...a5 and ...♗a6 is fully equal, as are plans with ...♘d7-e5.

a12) 11 a4 ♕h4 12 h3 ♘xf2! (12...♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘bd7 is also possible) 13 ♖xf2 (13 ♔xf2 ♗d4+ 14 ♔f3 h5! intending ...♗g4+) 13..♕xg3 14 ♗f4 ♕h4 15 ♗xd6 (15 ♘e2? ♕e7 16 ♕d2 ♘d7 17 ♖af1 ♘e5 with an essentially winning advantage for Black, Grom-Tolnai, Velden 1993) 15...♗d4 16 ♕f3 ♘d7! (16...♕xf2+ 17 ♕xf2 ♗xf2+ 18 ♔xf2 ♖e8 19 ♗xc5 ♘d7 20 ♗d4 ♘e5 ∓) 17 ♖f1 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♔h1 g5! and Black is better.

a2) 10..♕h4 11 h3 ♘xf2! 12 ♖xf2 ♕xg3 13 ♗f4 ♕h4 avoids the 10...a6 11 ♗e2 idea in line 'a11'. Then the play parallels line 'a12' unless White tries 14 ♘b5 a6 15 ♘c7 ♖a7 16 ♗xd6 ♗d4 17 ♕f3 ♘d7! 18 ♖a1 ♘e5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘e6 ♗xe6 21 fxe6 b5! ∓.

b) 10 ♖b1 ♘a6 (stopping b4) 11 h3 (11 a3 ♘e5 12 ♗c2 c4) 11...♘e5 12 ♗c2 ♘b4 13 ♗a4 a6!? (13...f5! =) 14 a3 ♘bd3 15 ♗e3 c4 16 f4 ♘d7 17 ♗c2 ♕a5 18 b4?! ♕xa3 19 ♗xd3 ♗xc3 20 ♗c1? ♗d4+! 21 ♘xd4 ♕xd3 ∓ Effert-Haist, Zell 1991.

c) 10 ♗c2 ♘e5 11 b3 b5! 12 ♖b1 (12 f4 ♘g4 13 h3 b4), Ghitescu-Moldovan, Bucharest 1995, and now Kapengut suggests 12...a6 as 'unclear'. Here 12...b4 13 ♘a4 and 13...♘bd7!? or 13...♗a6 looks fine.

d) 10 ♗f4 ♘a6 (10...f5!? 11 exf5 ♗xf5, Morante-Estebanell, Cajas 1989, may also be playable, but I don't fully trust 12 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 13 ♗g3 with moves like ♘f4 and ♕a4 to come) and now:

d1) 11 ♘g3?! ♘xh2! 12 ♗xd6 ♗g4! 13 ♕b3 ♕xd6 14 ♔xh2 h5! 15 ♔g1 h4 16 ♘ge2 ♘b4 ∓ Purgimon-Povah, corr. 1987-94.

d2) 11 a3 ♕e7 12 ♖b1 ♘e5 13 ♗c2 ♗d7 14 b4 cxb4 15 axb4 ♖fc8 16 ♗a4 ♖c4! 17 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 (or 17...♕xd7 18 b5 ♘c5) 18 ♘b5 ♘e5 ∓ P.Janse-Bezemer, Haarlem 1999.

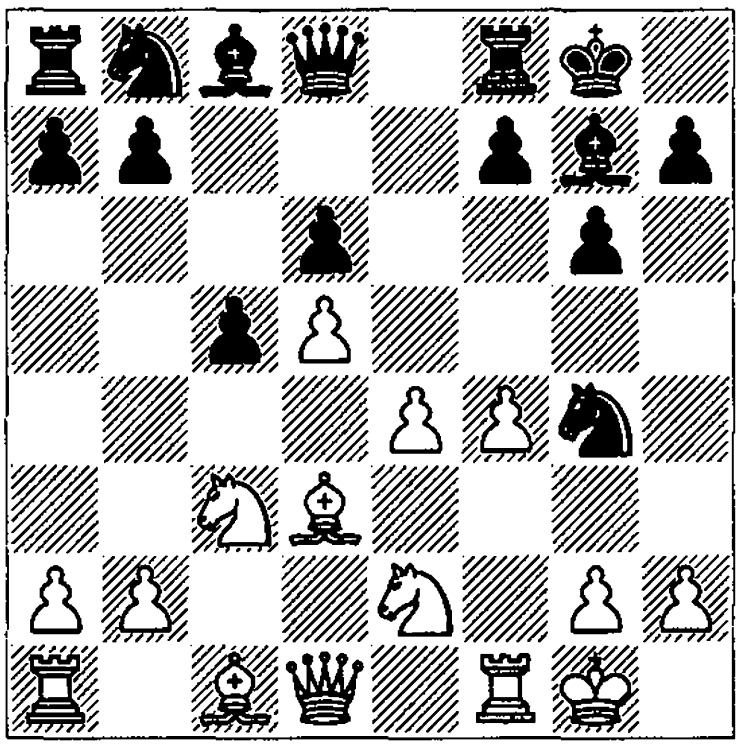
d3) 11 ♕d2 ♘e5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4 13 ♕c1 ♘b4 14 ♗b1 ♘e5 15 ♕d1 ('?!' –

Kapengut) 15...♕a5! 16 a3 c4 17 ♕d2 ♘bd3 18 b4!? ♕d8, Miles-Perenyi, Porz 1986. In this position both Kapengut and Schneider like Black.

d4) 11 ♘c1 (perhaps best) 11...♘e5 12 ♗e2 f5 13 ♕d2 ♘c7 = 14 ♘d3?! (14 ♗g5!?) 14...♘c4 15 ♕c1 b5! ∓, having in mind 16 ♘xb5? ♘xb5 17 ♕xc4 ♘d4 ∓ G.Martin-Sichev, corr. 1991.

e) 10 f4!? *(D)* sacrifices an exchange for some play, if Black chooses to accept it. Of the sources I have that take 9...♘g4 seriously, none of them mention 10 f4, probably (perhaps correctly) assuming that White lacks compensation.

B



This position is interesting enough to warrant fairly detailed coverage of several possibilities for Black:

e1) 10...c4 turns out to be rather risky but quite possibly playable; e.g., 11 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 12 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 13 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 14 ♘b5! (the only try for compensation) 14...♕b6 15 ♕d3 (15 ♕b3 a6 16 ♗e3 ♕d8 17 ♕a3 comes to the same thing) 15...a6 16 ♗e3 ♕d8 17 ♕a3 axb5! 18 ♕xa8 bxc4 19 ♕xb8 ♕e7 20 ♘g3 ♗f5! 21 ♕a7 ♗xe4 with at least equality; e.g., 22 ♗d4 ♗xd4 23 ♕xd4 ♖e8 with the idea that 24 ♕xc4 is met by 24...♗xd5!. This may not be to everyone's liking, and yet White cannot be happy groping around either.

e2) 10...f5 is an attractive thrust that can resemble 10...c4: 11 exf5 (11 h3 c4!; 11 e5 dxe5 12 h3 e4 13 ♗c4 ♘f6 ∓) 11...gxf5 (11...c4!? 12 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 13 ♔h1 ♗xf5 14 ♕e1 ♖e8 is unclear) 12 ♕b3 (12 h3 c4 13 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 14 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 15 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 16 ♘b5 ♕c5 17 ♕d3 ♖e8; 12 ♕c2 ♘a6 13 a3 c4 14 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ ∓) 12...♖e8 13 h3 ♘h6 = 14 ♗d2 a6 15 a4 b6!? 16 ♖f3 ♖a7 = intending ...♖e7.

e3) 10...♕h4!? 11 h3 ♘f6 is untidy, but better than it looks, because the queen is annoying on h4 and the combination of ...♘d7 and ...♘e8 can restrain the centre; e.g., 12 ♕e1 (12 ♘b5 ♘e8 13 f5 ♘d7 =; 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7 14 ♘e4 ♕e7; 12 f5 ♘e8) 12...♕xe1 13 ♖xe1 a6!? (or 13...♘bd7) 14 a4 (14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘fd7 =) 14...b6!? 15 b3 ♖a7 16 ♗b2 ♖e7 =.

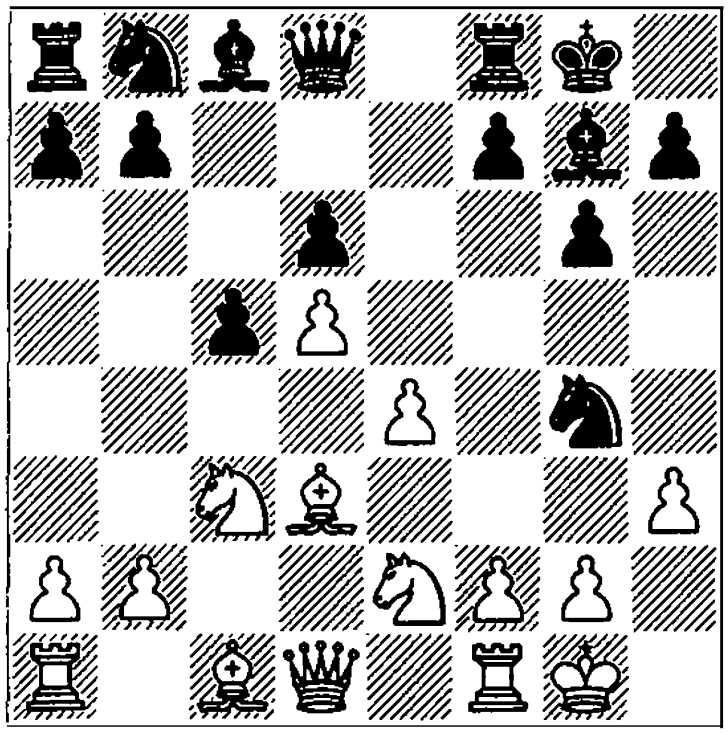
The lines in this note are remarkable, in that perfectly logical play by White leads nowhere. Hence the forcing 10 h3 *(D)*, to which we now return:

10...♘e5 11 ♗c2

Or:

a) 11 ♗e3?! is easily met by 11...f5 or 11...♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 f5.

b) 11 ♗b1 ♘a6 (with the bishop on b1, 11...a6!?, which is questionable with the bishop on c2, may be used to exploit the b3-square: 12 a4 ♖e8 13 f4



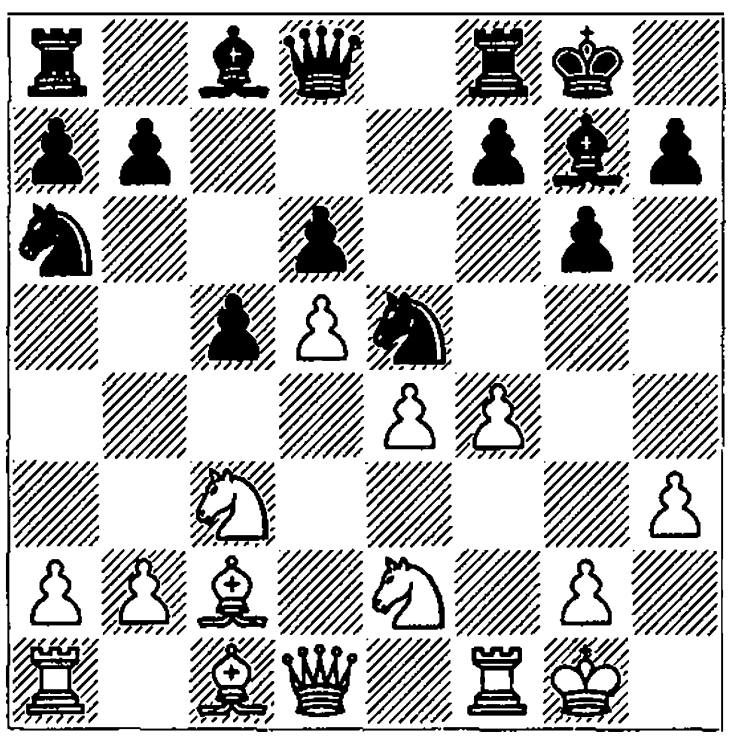
{13 b3 ♕h4!?} 13...♘c4 14 ♕d3 {14 b3 ♘a5 15 ♗c2 b5} 14...♘a5 15 ♗a2 ♘d7 = with the ideas ...c4 and/or ...♕b6; White lost a key tempo trying to defend b3, and still has a good deal of trouble with that square) 12 f4 ♘c4 13 ♕d3, Roemer-Perenyi, Balatonbereny 1988, and now Kapengut suggests 13...b5! 14 b3 ♘b4 15 ♕f3 ♘b6 16 ♗b2 (16 a3 ♘4xd5 17 exd5 b4) 16...f5 17 a3 ♘a6. In fact, 17...fxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♘a6 is positionally attractive as well.

11...♘a6 12 f4 *(D)*

Again the most common move. Others:

a) 12 ♘g3 ♘b4!? (12...♕h4) 13 ♗b1 ♕h4 14 a3 ♘a6 15 ♕e2 ♘c7 16 ♗e3 b5! = Tsiganova-Chernikova, Melitopol 1992; then Schneider offers 17 ♘xb5?! ♘xb5 18 ♕xb5 ♗xh3!.

b) 12 a3 ♖b8 13 f4 ♘c4 14 ♗d3 (14 b3 ♘a5 15 f5 b5 16 ♗b2 ♗e5 = Soln-Wolter, Schwarzach 1999) 14...♘a5 (the Perenyi manoeuvre! Otherwise 14...♘xb2 15 ♗xb2 c4 16 ♗xc4! ♕b6+ 17 ♔h1 ± Knaak-A.Schneider, Stara Zagora Z 1990) 15 ♗e3 b5!? (15...f5 is quite sensible, intending to meet 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♗xf5 by 17...♖xf5 with control of the queenside light squares, or 17...gxf5) 16 ♗xb5 (16 b4 might be better; still, something like 16...cxb4 17 axb4 ♘xb4 18 ♗xa7 ♖a8 19 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 20 ♘xd4 ♘xd3 21 ♕xd3 b4 probably holds the balance; e.g., 22 ♘cb5 ♗a6 23 ♖fb1 ♘b7) 16...♘c7 17 ♗d3 ♖xb2 18 ♕a4 and now, apart from 18...♘a8 19 ♖fb1 ♗d7, which was unclear in Urban-Stajčić, Miedzybrodzie 1991, 18...c4! merits attention.



12...♘c4

This was Perenyi's original idea, but as an alternative, 12...♘d7 looks fully playable as well:

a) 13 ♘g3 ♖b8 14 ♔h1 b5 (or 14...♘c7!? 15 a4 a6) 15 a4 bxa4 16 ♗xa4, Chekhov-Murdzia, Polish Cht (Lubniewice) 1994, and now Kapengut gives 16...♘c7 leading to complications, whereas Chekhov's own line 16...♘b4 17 ♗b5! a6 18 ♗e2 "with advantage" is contradicted by Schneider: 18...♕h4! 19 ♔h2 ♗d4 20 ♗d2

♖e8 21 ♗e1 ♕h6 22 ♗f2 ♗g7 23 ♕d2 ♘f6 with at least equality.

b) 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 (after 13...♘c7 14 a4 a6 Kapengut gives 15 ♘c1 b5 16 axb5 ♖b8, and instead proposes 15 ♘g3 ♖b8 16 e5!? dxe5 17 f5 with compensation) 14 a3 (14 ♕d2 b5 15 ♖ae1 b4 16 ♘d1 ♘c7 was unclear in the game Chekhov-Stajčić, Kecskemet 1991) 14...b5!? (14...♖e8 15 ♕d2 b5 16 b4 ♘b6 is probably more accurate: 17 ♗d3 cxb4 18 axb4 ♘xb4 19 ♗xb5 ♗d7 =) 15 b4 ♘b6! 16 ♗d3 cxb4 17 axb4 ♘xb4 (Kapengut's 17...♘a4 would be well met by 18 ♕b3) 18 ♗xb5 a6 19 ♗d3 f5! 20 ♖b1! a5 21 ♘d4 fxe4 = (or 21...♗d7) Paulsen-Hartmann, Bundesliga 1986/7.

13 b3

Or:

a) 13 ♗d3 ♘b6 (13...♘a5!?) 14 ♘g3 ♕h4 (14...♘b4 15 ♗b1, Paulsen-Arnold, Bundesliga 1985/6, is also best answered by 15...♕h4) 15 ♕f3 ♘b4 16 ♗b1 ♗d4+ 17 ♔h2 ♗d7 18 a3 ♘a6 "with chances for both sides" – Schneider.

b) 13 ♔h1 b5 14 b3 ♘b6 15 ♗b2 ♘c7 = Arduman-Ghinda, Komotini 1993.

13...♘a5!?

The Perenyi theme again. 13...♘b6 has also been played with success, but we have enough options already.

14 a3

14 ♗e3 b5! 15 e5!? dxe5 16 ♘xb5 (16 f5?! b4! 17 fxg6 {17 ♘a4 e4} 17...hxg6 18 ♘e4 f5 19 ♘g5 f4 ∓ Shabalov) 16...exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♕b6! 18 ♘bc3, and now 18...c4+ with complex play, Vilela-Andres, Havana 1987; or 18...♘b4 intending 19 ♗b1 ♗a6!, as in the game Nenashev-Shabalov, Tashkent 1987.

14...b5 15 ♖b1 b4 16 ♘a2 bxa3 17 ♗xa3 ♖b8 18 ♔h2 ♗d7

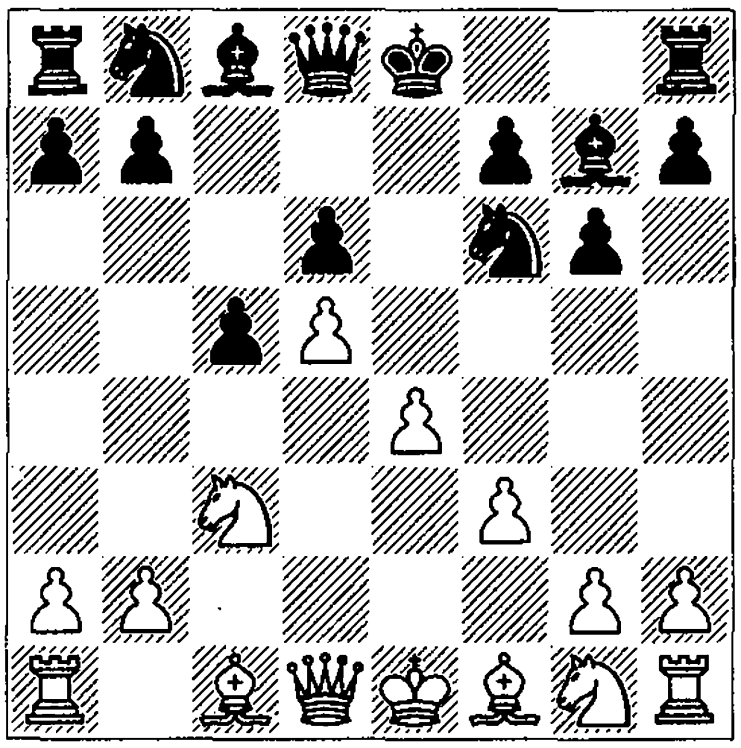
The game is equal, Serper-Nenashev, Novosibirsk 1989. It's significant that Nenashev, having such trouble as White in the last note, switched to the black side of this line. In a few more moves, he had an overwhelming advantage but (probably in terrible time-trouble) managed to lose.

I would love to see more of this dashing, provocative variation.

It is hard not to admire White's unpretentious build-up for a kingside attack in the ♗d3 and ♘ge2 line. Caught unawares, Black could surely fall victim to the thematic pawn sacrifice '1' e5 dxe5 '2' f5, as even the mighty Tal did versus Penrose (note to Black's 16th move in Line A1). But in that particular variation, Black has a wonderfully resilient position and counterattacking chances that at least equal White's attacking ones. Then, in Line B, we saw Black engage in a sort of absurdist Modernism. 9...♘g4 and the journey of the knight to a5 via e5 and c4 may look outrageously stupid to the Classical mind, but it has a mad logic to it and as far as I can see, gives Black unbalanced and legitimate play.

8 Kapengut's 7 f3 System

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 *(D)*



This set-up is called the 'Kapengut System' (after its leading analyst, who devoted 81 densely-packed pages to it in his A65 monograph) or (as Kapengut himself called it) the 'Half-Sämisch Variation' (for reasons which will become clear). With 7 f3, White strengthens his centre and thus makes it easier to restrain ...b5 (remember that ...b5 tricks based upon ...♘xe4 are common in the Benoni) White also prepares ♗e3 or ♗g5-e3 without having to worry about ...♘g4. On the negative side, 7 f3 is rather slow. It prevents White's knight from going to f3, makes a future f4 a loss of tempo, and somewhat weakens White's dark squares.

I considered skipping this chapter entirely (with coverage of 8 ♗d3 elsewhere) because the variations which follow almost all arise from the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3) – that is, the lines of that defence in which Black has played ...c5, White has answered with d5, and Black has then played ...e6 followed by ...exd5. The contemporary reality is that the variations in this chapter stem much more often from the King's Indian move-order than from the Benoni move-order, especially in the case of 8 ♗e3 and 8 ♗g5. Gallagher's *The Sämisch King's Indian*; for example, covers all the lines below except for 8 ♗d3.

Why then are the 7 f3 lines so often listed under the Benoni? Because historically, at the time *ECO* codes were developed, White rarely played 6 ♗g5 in the KID Sämisch, and after 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3, Black almost never played 6...c5 because it lost a pawn. It wasn't suspected then that the latter sacrifice might turn out to give Black remarkable compensation and go on to become the leading anti-Sämisch move! Since that sacrifice achieved popularity, White has often switched to playing 6...c5 7 d5, after which 7...e6 8 ♕d2 (or 8 ♘ge2) 8...exd5 9 cxd5

transposes into the subject-matter of this chapter.

In addition, fewer players today employ 7 f3 against the Benoni because other lines have become more popular. Nevertheless, *ECO* itself, *Informator*, and the Informator monographs are based upon this opening code, and other publications employ it as well. For example, Psakhis organizes his whole book around *ECO* codes, and *NCO* follows the order of *ECO* with minor and localized changes.

Since the Benoni player does have to confront this variation, my compromise has been to suggest thorough solutions for Black but using (with one exception) less complicated lines that largely bypass the extremely dense main lines. As a matter of priority, I would rather devote precious space to uniquely Benoni variations. Finally, while I have been heavily dependent upon Kapengut for this chapter's material, you will still find a good deal of original analysis, especially in the main lines.

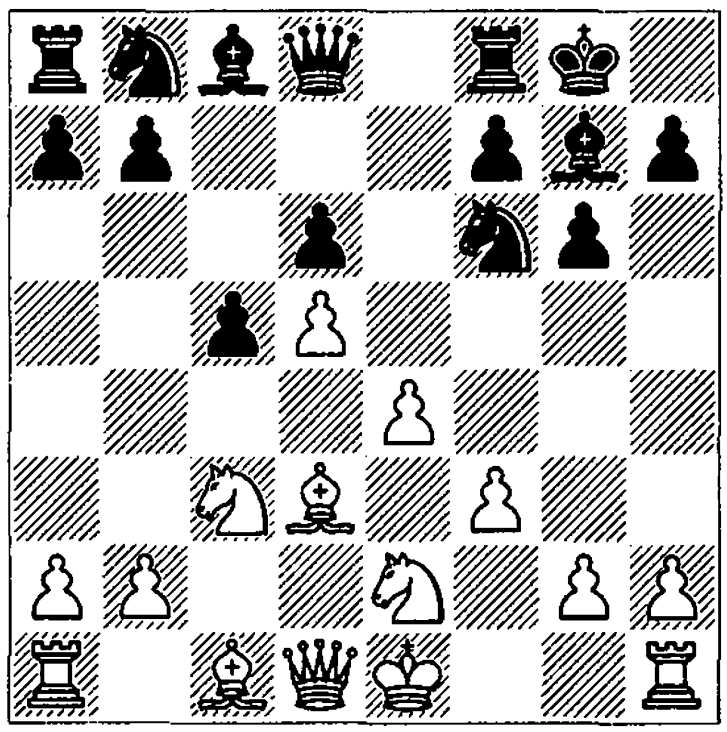
Without further ado, then, here are White's moves:

A: 8 ♗d3 148
B: 8 ♘ge2 150
C: 8 ♗e3 152
D: 8 ♗g5 155

8 ♗b5+?! is rather illogical, since White loses time with his bishop without any corresponding gain: 8...♘bd7 (or 8...♗d7 =) 9 ♗f4 ♕e7 10 ♕d2 a6 11 ♗e2 b5!? (after 11...0-0! White's bishop is potentially misplaced on e2; then 12 ♘h3 b5 bypasses the ♗xb5 sacrifice in the next note) 12 ♘h3 (12 ♗xb5!? axb5 13 ♘xb5 is unclear after 13...♘xe4 14 fxe4 ♕xe4+ and ...0-0) 12...0-0 13 ♗h6? (you can tell that this is an old game!) 13...♘xe4! 14 ♘xe4 ♕h4+ 15 g3 ♕xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 17 ♘xd6 ♘b6 ∓ 18 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 19 f4 ♖fe8 20 ♘g1 ♘xd5 with an extra pawn, Chekhover-Alatortsev, Moscow 1935.

A)

8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘ge2 *(D)*



B

This position resembles the last chapter, but White has already played f3. That move is unnecessarily committal and poses few problems. Because a few key 8 ♗d3 lines can transpose to various instances of f3 in the previous chapter, both Psakhis and Schneider don't analyse 8 ♗d3 in this move-order at all.

9...a6

9...♘a6 is also fine. As this is a fairly minor line, I won't give two solutions.

10 a4

This will be played soon anyway.

a) Mysteriously, the few sources that even cover 8 ♗d3 give 10 0-0, but do not mention 10...b5 in reply. Then 11 ♔h1 or 11 a3 would be more to the point than 11 ♕e1 ♘bd7 12 ♕h4 ♕b6!? 13 ♗e3 ♘e5 14 ♗c2 b4 15 ♘d1 a5 16 b3 ♗a6 ∓ Takemoto-Vaganian, Teesside U-26 Wcht 1974. Notice also that 11 a4?! c4 12 ♗b1 b4 13 ♘a2 ♕b6+ 14 ♔h1 a5 favours Black, who has the moves ...♗a6 and ...♘bd7 in store. In any case, 10...b5 should be at least adequate in response to 10 0-0.

b) 10 ♗e3 ('?!' Kapengut, but that goes too far) 10...b5 11 a3 ♖e8 12 ♕d2 ♘bd7 13 b4 (the point of 11 a3; not 13 ♗h6? ♘xe4!) 13...cxb4 (I would prefer the elastic 13...♗b7 14 0-0 ♖c8 15 ♖ac1 ♘e5 = targeting c4 and d3) 14 axb4 ♗b7 15 0-0 ♖c8 16 ♖ac1 (16 ♘d4 ♖xc3! 17 ♕xc3 ♘xd5 18 exd5 {18 ♕d2 ♘xe3 19 ♕xe3 ♕b6 ∓} 18...♖xe3 19 ♔f2 ♘b6!? ∓ Kapengut; excellent analysis, although the final position is resignable; e.g., 20 ♖ad1 ♕h4+) 16...♘b6 (I don't like this at all; 16...♘e5 17 ♘d4 ♘xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘d7 {or 18...♖c4} must be better) 17 ♘b1! ♘fd7 18 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 19 ♘d4 ♗b7 and now Kapengut likes Black after 20 ♘b3 ♘e5 21 ♘a5 ♗a8 22 ♖c1 f5!, Guigones-Demarre, French Cht 1989, but simply 20 ♖c1! confers a large advantage on White (20...♘e5 21 ♘a3!).

10...♘bd7 11 0-0

Delaying or omitting this move is ineffective:

a) 11 h4 h5 12 ♗g5 ♘e5 13 ♗c2 ♗d7 14 ♕c1?! b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 gives Black a slight advantage, Merlini-Derieux, Cannes 1995, in view of 17 ♕f4! (best) 17...b4! 18 ♗xf6 (18 ♘d1 ♗a4! having in mind 19 ♗xa4?? ♘d3+) 18...♕a1+ 19 ♘d1 b3! ∓.

b) 11 ♗f4 ♕e7 12 ♕d2 ♘e5 13 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 offers Black at least equality (two bishops, dark squares), J.Andreasen-Ruxton, Arnhem jr Ech 1989/90.

11...♘e5

Any logical move equalizes here; e.g., 11...♕c7, 11...♖b8 or 11...♖e8.

12 ♗c2

Or:

a) 12 f4?! is premature: 12...♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♖e8 14 ♘g3 ♗d7 ∓ (or 14...♘g4 ∓).

b) 12 ♗e3 ♖e8 13 b3 (13 ♕d2 ♖b8 14 ♖fb1 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 ♘d7 16 b4 f5! ∓ Renet-Haïk, Paris 1986) 13...♘xd3 (or 13...♖b8) 14 ♕xd3 ♖b8 = (or 14...♘d7 =).

12...♖b8 13 f4

13 ♖b1 prepares b4, but 13...b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 b4?! fails to hold the balance after 15...cxb4 16 ♖xb4 ♕a5 17 ♖b3 b4 18 ♘b1 ♗a6 ∓.

13...♘c4

13...♘ed7 is also playable, since White has wasted a move with f3-f4 and is faced with ...b5; e.g., 14 ♘g3 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 e5 dxe5 17 f5 ♗b7 (17...e4!?) 18 d6 and apart from 18...b4 19 ♘ce4 ♗xe4 with an edge for Black, Ravikumar-Murshed, Calcutta 1986, Kapengut suggests 18...♕b6.

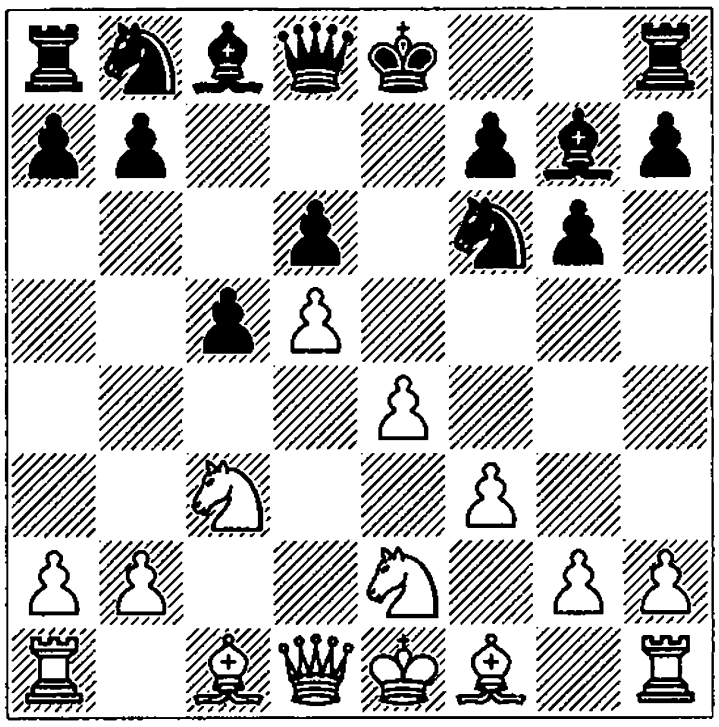
After the text-move (13...♘c4), Lida Garcia-Niegovich, Olivos 1993 went 14 b3 ♘b6 (14...♘a5!?) 15 a5

♘a8! 16 ♖a2 ♘c7 (a manoeuvre that comes up in both the Benoni and Benko Gambit) 17 ♗d3 ♖e8 18 ♘g3 b5 =.

B)

8 ♘ge2 *(D)*

B



This has become more common in the last few years. It can very easily transpose to Line C (8 ♗e3) or D (8 ♗g5). We will look at an independent line of particular interest.

8...0-0 9 ♘g3

9 ♗f4 ♘h5 10 ♗e3 f5 leaves Black very active; an attractive possibility would be 11 exf5 ♖xf5! 12 ♕d2 ♘d7! with the point that 13 g4 is answered by 13...♘e5! 14 ♘g1 (14 ♗g2 ♘c4) 14...♖xf3 15 gxh5 ♗h6!!.

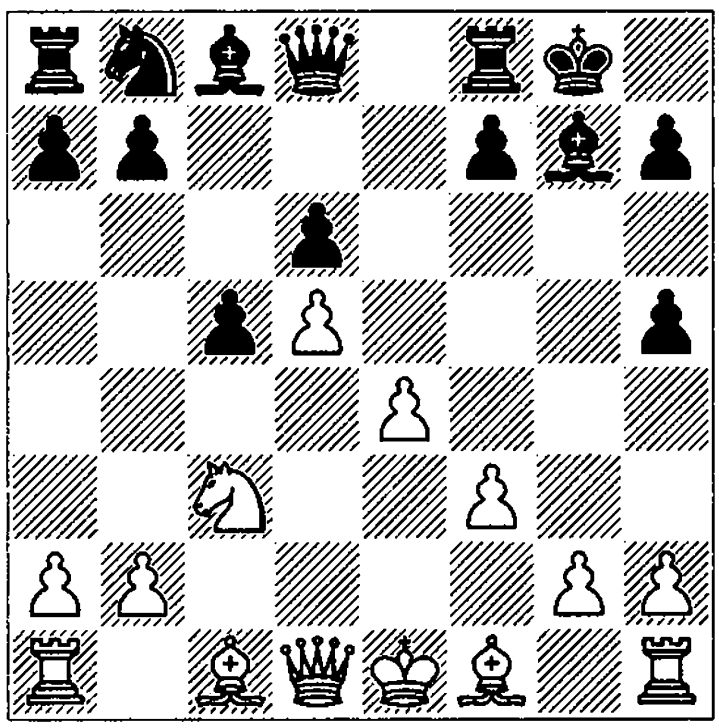
9...♘h5!?

A new, eccentric, and fascinating idea in this position. The same idea can also be played with ...a6 and a4 thrown in, but it may be better to preserve the idea of ...♘a6.

Since 9...♘h5 is so speculative, I should point out that older techniques such as 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 still work here. But I think the most appropriate alternative is 9...♘a6, if only because the usual problem with ...♘a6 – White's attack by f4 – comes at the cost of a critical tempo and tends to be too slow. Briefly: 9...♘a6 10 ♗e2 ♘c7 11 0-0 ♖b8 (11...a6 12 a4 ♘d7 13 ♗f4 ♘e5 14 ♖b1 h5 15 ♕d2 b5!? 16 axb5 ♘xb5 17 ♘xb5 axb5 18 ♗xb5 ♕b6 19 ♗e2 ♖a2 with compensation, Novikov-Gufeld, Tbilisi 1988) 12 ♗g5 (12 ♗f4 b5 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 ♔h1 was Christiansen-Nunn, Munich 1991; Black can then play 14...b4 with ideas like ...a5 and ...♘b5-d4) 12...h6 13 ♗e3 ♖e8 14 ♕d2 ♔h7 15 a4 a6 16 f4!? b5 17 e5 b4 18 ♘ce4 ♘fxd5 19 ♖ad1 dxe5 20 f5 ♗b7 21 ♗xc5 ♘f4! with an attack, Czerwonski-Kaminski, Polish Ch 1994.

10 ♘xh5 gxh5 *(D)*

W



Now Black has permitted his h-pawns to become doubled, and unlike other comparable variations, he hasn't even eliminated White's light-squared bishop in the process (i.e., by ♗e2 and

♗xh5). But the pawn being on f3 weakens White's dark squares, he is behind in development, and ...f5 promises to cause trouble on the kingside.

11 ♗d3

This move has been played in almost all games with 9...♘h5 thus far. Otherwise:

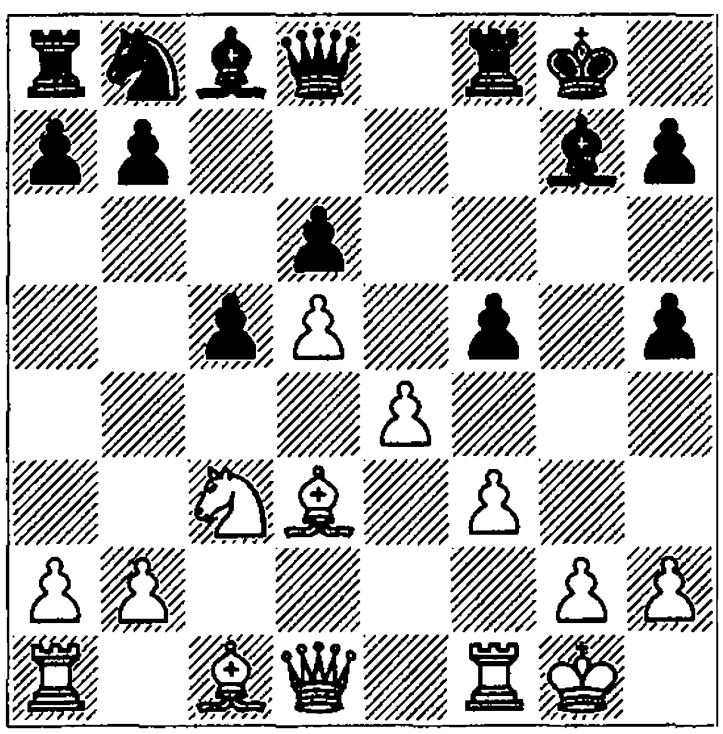
a) 11 ♗e3 f5 12 ♕d2 would also be logical, when a sample continuation might be 12...fxe4 (12...a6 13 a4 fxe4 is similar) 13 ♘xe4 ♗f5 14 ♗d3 ♘d7 (14...c4!?) 15 0-0 (15 ♘g5 ♕b6 16 ♖b1 ♖ae8 with good play; e.g., 17 ♘e6 ♗xe6 18 dxe6 ♘e5!) 15...♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♗xe4 (or 16...♕d7 17 ♖ae1 ♗xe4 18 fxe4 ♘g4 =) 17 fxe4 ♘g4 (or, again, 17...♕d7) 18 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 19 ♖f1 ♕e7 20 ♗xg4 hxg4 21 ♖f4 h5 =.

b) 11 ♗f4 was played as I was writing this chapter (I suspect the theory will be much more fleshed out by the time you read this!): 11...f5 12 ♕d2 ♕f6 13 ♗g5 ♕g6 (13...♕e5!? is also possible, to answer 14 ♗d3 with 14...♘d7 15 0-0 f4 16 ♗h4 a6 17 a4 and 17...♖b8, or even 17...♕e8 intending ...♘e5) 14 ♗d3. Here, instead of the committal 14...♘a6, as in Ward-G.Buckley, British Ch (Millfield) 2000, this appears to be the right time for 14...fxe4! 15 ♘xe4 (15 ♗xe4 ♗f5; 15 fxe4 ♗d4 16 ♗f4 ♘d7 =) 15...♗f5 16 0-0 ♘d7 = with active piece-play.

11...f5 12 0-0 *(D)*

12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 0-0 (13 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 14 0-0 ♘a6 followed by ...♘c7, targeting the d-pawn – Mortensen) 13...♘a6 (13...♗xd3!? 14 ♕xd3 ♘d7 "also looks OK" – Mortensen) 14 ♗xa6!? bxa6 15 ♗e3 ♖b8!? (perhaps more accurate is Ward's suggestion of 15...♖e8 or Mortensen's of 15...♕h4) 16 ♕d2 ♕f6 17 ♖ac1 ♕g6 18 b3 h4!? 19 ♘e2 ♗d3 20 ♘f4 ♖xf4 21 ♗xf4 ♗xf1 22 ♔xf1 (22 ♖xf1 c4! followed by ...c3 – Mortensen) 22...h3 23 g3 ♖f8 24 ♖e1 (24 ♕e2 ♖e8 25 ♕xa6 ♗d4! intending ...♕h5, and on ♕d3, ...♗e3) 24...♗e5 (24...♗d4!?) 25 ♗xe5 ♖xf3+ 26 ♔g1 (26 ♔e2? ♕g4 is too strong) 26...dxe5 27 ♖xe5 ♖xg3+ 28 hxg3 ♕xg3+ 29 ♔h1 ♕xe5 30 d6 ♕e4+ = Ward-Mortensen, Copenhagen 1999.

B



12...♘a6

An all-purpose move, clearing the back rank, threatening ...c4 in many positions and preparing ...♘c7 and ...b5 while staying in touch with f5. Nevertheless, a different and promising move is 12...♘d7:

a) 13 exf5 ♘e5 =.

b) 13 ♘e2!? c4 and now 14 ♗c2 ½-½ was the finish of Dreev-Bologan, Beijing 2000. Instead, 14 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 15 ♔h1 ♘e5 gives Black excellent compensation.

c) 13 ♗c2 ♘e5 14 ♘e2'!' ♕h4'!' (Dreev's annotations, but I like the look of 14...♘g6, practically forcing 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 and if 17 ♘g3, then 17...♖f8! 18 ♘xh5?! ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕h4 and now 20 ♘g3?! ♗e5 or 20 g4 ♕h3 intending ..♖ae8, when White is very tied down) 15 f4! ♘c4 (15...♘g6) 16 ♘g3 ♘xb2 17 ♕e2 ♕g4 18 ♖f3, Dreev-Peng Xiaomin, Beijing 2000. At this point *Fritz* suggests the remarkable 18...♘d1!!, when the obvious line would seem to be 19 ♕xd1 ♗xa1 20 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 21 ♖g3 ♗d4+ 22 ♔f1 ♕xg3 23 hxg3 ♗g4. This may still be unclear, but I'd rather be Black.

13 a3

Or:

a) 13 ♗f4!? fxe4 14 fxe4 c4! 15 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 16 ♔h1 ♕xb2 17 ♗xd6! and now Black chose 17...♗g4!? in Dreev-Schekachev, Russian Ch (St Petersburg) 1998, when Black won a piece but White's pawns were strong and there was an early, justifiable draw. Similar play would have resulted from 17...♖xf1+.

b) 13 ♗e3 is again untried: 13...♖b8 14 ♕d2 ♘c7 15 a4 a6 looks solid; Black could also try 13...f4!? 14 ♗f2 ♗e5 and attempt to play on both sides of the board.

13...♗d7 14 ♕c2 ♕f6

It's difficult to decide whether to play ...f4 in this line. One possibility is 14...f4!? 15 ♘e2 ♗e5 16 ♖b1 b5 17 b3 ♘c7 18 ♗d2 ♕g5 19 ♗a5 ♘e8 20 ♔h1 ♘f6, thinking about ...h4 and ...♘h5. Nevertheless, I prefer the text-move.

15 ♔h1 ♖ac8

A different possibility is 15...♖ab8 16 ♗e3 b5!?.

16 ♗e3 c4 17 ♗e2 b5!? 18 f4

An intended improvement over 18 ♗xa7 ♘c5 19 ♖ad1, when, instead of 19...♔h8 20 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 21 f4 ± Chernin-Glek, 2nd Bundesliga 1998/9, Glek suggests 19...f4! with compensation. I agree, since White has a hard time finding anything constructive while Black improves his position (20 ♖g1 h4).

18...♘c5 19 e5!?

19 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 20 ♗xh5 is critical, pitting the two bishops against an extra pawn; e.g., 20...♕h4 (20...a5) 21 ♗e2 a5 and Black has active play, but it's hard to assess this.

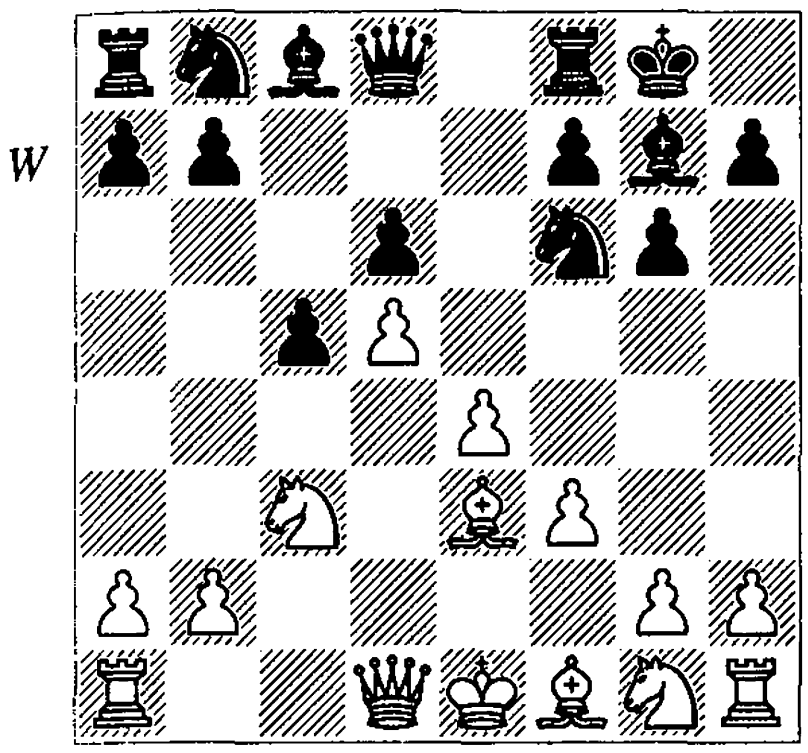
After the text-move (19 e5!?), Khenkin-David, French Cht 1998/9 went 19...dxe5 20 fxe5 ♕xe5 21 ♗f4 ♕f6 22 d6 (22 ♗xh5 ♘d3 ∓) 22...♔h8 23 ♖ad1 ½-½. Black has ideas like ...a5 and ...b4, whereas White has a well-supported passed pawn.

I have to admit that 9...♘h5!? is awfully committal, and some players may find Black's pawn-structure objectionable. Nevertheless, Black enjoys active play, and sometimes it's fun to bypass standard theory. Alternatively, for the cautious at heart, I would recommend 9...♘a6 as a sound alternative that doesn't require a great deal of study.

C)

8 ♗e3 0-0 *(D)*

Once White makes his next move, we have transposed into a 'pure' Sämisch King's Indian, i.e., 1 d4 ♘f6



2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5 7 d5 e6 [8 ♕d2 or 8 ♘ge2] 8...exd5 9 cxd5. We examine:

C1: 9 ♘ge2 153
C2: 9 ♕d2 154

C1)

9 ♘ge2

Now instead of transpositions to fashionable lines involving the move ...h5, there is an intriguing alternative:

9...a6 10 a4

Black experiences few difficulties if White allows ...b5: 10 ♘g3 b5 11 ♗e2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♘e5 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 b3 (14 ♗h6 ♗h8 15 ♘d1 ♘fd7 16 ♖c1 ♘b6 17 b3 f6 18 ♗e3 ♗d7 19 h4 ♘f7 20 h5 f5! with double-edged play, Ward-Gallagher, British Ch (Scarborough) 1999) 14...♗d7 15 a4 bxa4, Begovac-Wojtkiewicz, Bern 1993, and now 16 bxa4! ♕a5 is best, with equality.

10...♘bd7 11 ♘g3 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♗d7

13 f4!?

A confrontational move, but complications will follow in any case:

a) Psakhis's proposal 13 h3 is met by 13...b5! (13...♘h5!?) 14 f4 (14 axb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♕b6 17 ♗e2 ♕xb2 with equal play) 14...♘c4 15 ♗xc4 bxc4 16 0-0 ♖b8 17 ♕d2 ♖b3 18 f5 ♕e7 19 ♖f3 ♖fb8 gives Black a slight advantage, Nenashev-Banikas, Khania 1999.

b) 13 0-0 b5! 14 h3 (14 axb5 axb5 15 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♕b6 ∓ Seirawan-Ivanchuk, Roquebrune blitz 1992) 14...♖b8 15 b3 ♘e8! 16 ♖c1 ♕h4 with plenty of play, Gallagher-Nunn, London Lloyds Bank 1990.

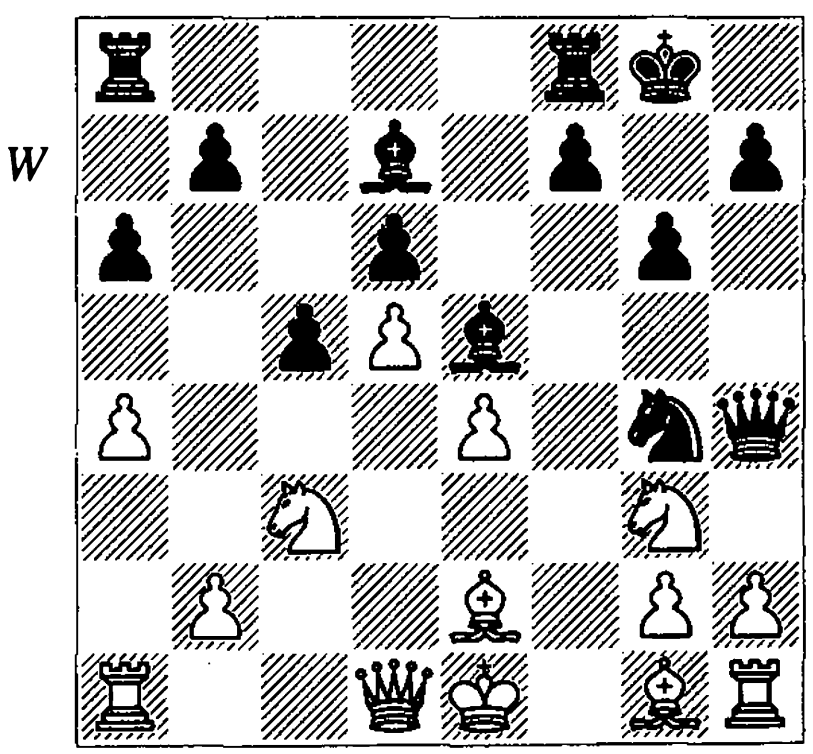
13...♘fg4!

This entertaining approach, sacrificing a piece, was the product of over-the-board inspiration by the Bristol player Chris Beaumont. For those who don't believe in this idea, 13...♘eg4 14 ♗d2 h5 15 h3 ♘h6 is still held to be equal. But, like 13...♘fg4, it has barely been tested.

14 ♗g1! ♕h4 15 fxe5

Equality results from 15 ♕b3 b5 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 (or 16...c4) 17 ♘d1 bxa4 18 ♕f3 f5 =.

15...♗xe5 *(D)*



From the diagram, analysis by Levitt goes 16 ♕d3! (16 ♗xg4? ♗xg3+ 17 hxg3 ♕xh1 18 ♔f1 f5! was good for Black in Levitt-Beaumont, British League (4NCL) 1995/6) 16...c4! 17 ♕f3 f5 18 0-0-0 (18 exf5 ♗xf5 ∓) 18...fxe4 19 ♕xe4. Now instead of Levitt's 19...♕g5+, against which Nunn offers 20 ♖d2! ♗f4 21 ♕d4! ±, I prefer 19...♖ae8!, and without pretending to know what's going on, I would assess this as dynamically balanced. A sample line derived from *Nimzo 7.32* and *Fritz 6* (with some disciplinary guidance) goes 20 ♕xc4 (20 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 is too strong) 20...b5!? 21 ♕c7 (21 ♕b4!? a5 22 ♕xa5 ♗xg3 23 ♗xb5 ♗f5! is unclear) 21...♖e7! 22 ♗d4 ♗f4+ 23 ♔b1 ♘xh2, and so forth, ending in equality. Entertaining stuff!

C2)

9 ♕d2 ♘a6!?

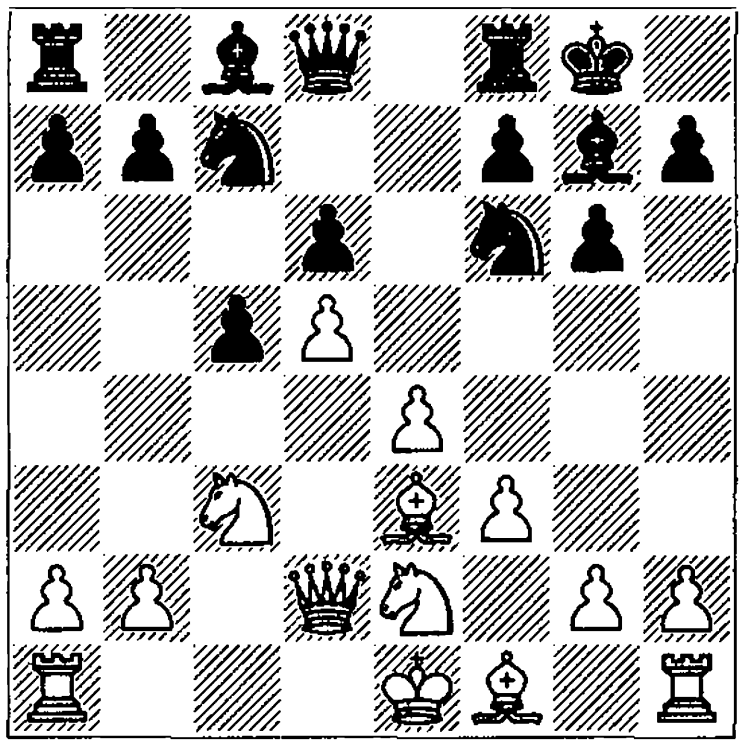
A rare approach, but one with a good reputation. As explained above, ...♘a6 is particularly appropriate when White has played f3 because it would take two moves for him to play the move Black most fears, i.e., f4. As always, 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 (or 10...♘bd7) is quite playable.

10 ♘ge2

10 ♗d3 could lead to some curious play after 10...♖e8 11 ♘ge2 ♗d7!? (11...♘d7 12 f4 ♘b4 13 ♗b5 {13 ♗b1 ♘b6!} 13...a6!! 14 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 15 a3 a5! was the amazing course of Pliasunov-Simantsev, St Petersburg Chigorin mem 2000; Black stands well!) 12 ♘b5!? ♕b6 13 a4 ♘b4! 14 ♕xb4 (14 ♗c4 a6 15 a5?? axb5) 14...a6! 15 ♕b3 (15 0-0 ♘xd5!) 15...axb5 16 0-0 ♕a5! = with the idea 17 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 18 ♕xb5 ♘xd5.

10...♘c7 *(D)*

10...♗d7!? deserves consideration: 11 g4!? (11 ♘g3 ♖e8) 11...b5 12 ♘g3 b4 Kapengut; then 13 ♗xa6 bxc3 14 bxc3 ♕a5 threatens ...♘g4.



11 ♘g3

Or 11 ♘c1 ♖b8 12 a4 (12 e5 ♘fe8! 13 exd6 ♘xd6 14 ♗xc5 ♖e8+ 15 ♗e2 ♘c4) 12...a6 13 a5 ♖e8 14 ♗e2 b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 =.

11...♖b8?!

11...♖e8! is more accurate, not allowing e5: after 12 ♗e2 a6 13 a4 ♖b8 14 a5 ♗d7 15 0-0 ♘b5 the position is equal.

12 a4

Playing 11...♖e8 first would have avoided 12 e5!, which I like for White after 12...♘fe8 13 exd6 ♘xd6 14 0-0-0!? b6 15 ♘ce4! ♘ce8 16 ♗e2 ±.

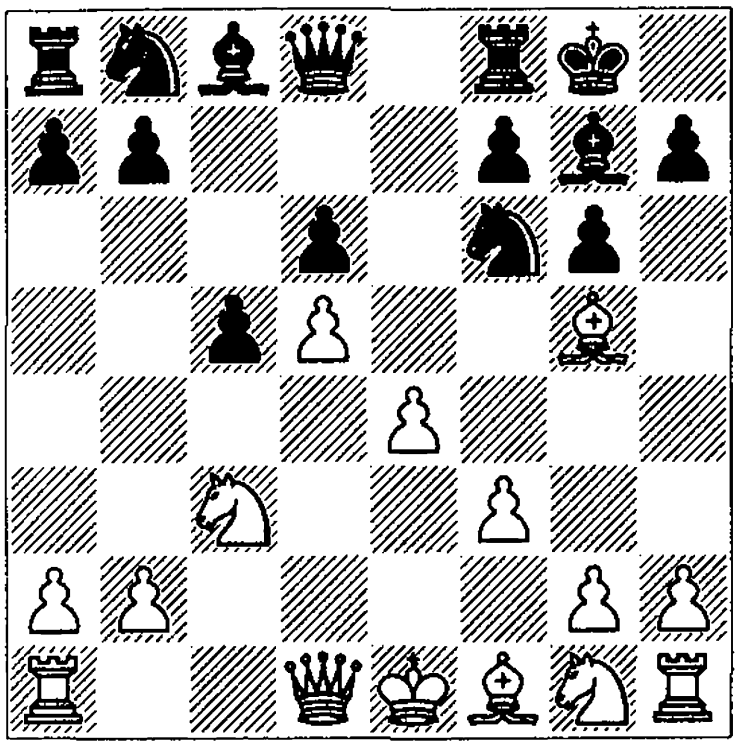
12...♖e8 13 ♗e2 a6 14 0-0 b5

Damljanović-Ivanović, Yugoslav Ch (Kladovo) 1990 continued 15 axb5

axb5 (15...♘xb5!?) 16 ♗h6 b4 17 ♘d1 ♗d7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘e3 ♘b5 20 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 21 ♖f2 ('unclear' – Kapengut) 21...♔g8! 22 b3 ♖a8 23 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 24 ♕b2 ♕d8 and ...♘d7 =.

D)

8 ♗g5 0-0 *(D)*



W

9 ♕d2

After 9 ♘ge2, play tends to continue 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘g3 h5 12 ♗e2 ♕a5, when 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 transposes to the main line. If 13 0-0, Black has 13...♘h7! = with the idea that 14 ♗e7? is met by 14...♖e8 15 ♗xd6 h4 16 ♘h1 ♕b6 ∓.

9...a6

Those looking for something effective but out of the ordinary should check the theory on 9...♗d7.

10 a4

The idea of allowing ...b5 had a brief spurt of interest 4-5 years ago, but has again faded into obscurity. An abbreviated overview of typical play: 10 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 11 ♘g3 b5 12 ♗e2 and then:

a) 12...c4 (this has the advantage of reorganizing the queenside without delay) 13 0-0 ♘c5 14 ♔h1 ♗d7 (or 14...♖e8 15 ♕f4!? ♕e7 16 ♕h4?, Lautier-Xie Jun, Monte Carlo rpd 1996, 16...h6! 17 ♗xh6 ♘fxe4! ∓) 15 ♗h6 (the point of Black's move-order is to hold his own on the queenside after, for example, 15 ♖ab1 a5! 16 a4 b4 17 ♘b5 ♘xa4 18 ♗xc4 ♕b6 19 ♗e3 ♘c5 20 ♘d4 a4) 15...♗xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♕e7 = 17 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 18 ♗f1 ♖ac8 19 ♖ac1 a5 with equal chances, Dreev-Van Wely, London ECC 1996.

b) More conservative is 12...♖e8 13 0-0 ♖b8 (13...c4 is similar to line 'a') 14 a4 (14 ♖ab1 ♕a5 =) 14...c4 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖a7 ♘c5 17 ♗e3 b4 18 ♘a4 (18 ♘b1 ♕b6) 18...c3 19 bxc3 ♘xa4 20 ♖xa4 bxc3 =.

10...♖e8 11 ♘ge2

11 ♗e2 h5 12 ♗d1?! is too slow: 12...♕a5 13 ♖a3 (to prevent ...b5) 13...♘bd7 14 ♘ge2 ♘e5 15 b3 b5 and Black has a clear advantage, Tegshsuren-Shulman, Sioux Falls 2000.

11...♘bd7 12 ♘g3

Or:

a) A popular option is 12 ♘d1, when one important line goes 12...♘e5 13 ♘ec3 ♕a5 14 ♗e2 (14 ♖a3 ♕b4!) 14...b5 15 0-0 ♘fd7 16 ♘f2 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 (17 axb5 ♕xa1 18 ♖xa1 ♘xd2 19 ♗xd2 ♖b8!?) 17...bxc4 18 f4. This is the often-quoted Meulders-Douven, Tilburg 1993, which went 18...♖b8 19 e5 dxe5 20 ♘fe4! ♕b6 21 f5! intending 21...♕xb2 22 ♕e1! with a terrific attack. But simply 18...h6 19 ♗h4 ♖b8 looks much better, since 20 e5 dxe5 21 ♘fe4 ♕b6 22 f5 is now

unconvincing due to 22...g5 23 ♗f2 ♕xb2. I also think that 18...♗d4! merits strong consideration. In my opinion, this line has been overrated.

b) 12 ♘c1 h6!? (12...♖b8 13 ♗e2 ♕c7 is another approach, from the game M.Franco-Tal, Varna OL 1962) 13 ♗e3 (13 ♗xh6? ♘xe4 ∓) 13...h5 14 ♗e2 ♘e5 15 0-0 ♘h7 16 ♖a3 (16 ♘1a2 f5!; 16 ♖b1 f5 17 b4 b6 18 ♔h1 ♘f6 19 exf5 ♗xf5 =) 16...f5 17 ♘1a2 (17 h3 ♘f6 18 f4 ♘f7 = with control of e4) 17...♘f6 18 a5 fxe4 19 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 20 fxe4 ♗g4 and Black has what he wants, having isolated White's e-pawn and secured e5, Alterman-Gelfand, Riga 1987.

12...h5

Or 12...♕a5 first. The move ...h5 in these positions anticipates a later ...♘h7 and/or ...h4.

13 ♗e2 ♕a5 14 0-0 c4!

Very aggressive. I think that the alternative 14...♘h7 ultimately equalizes, but it is harder going.

15 ♗e3

15 ♔h1? ♘h7! (15...♕b4 =) 16 ♗xc4 (not 16 ♗e3?? h4, when Black wins a piece!) 16...♕b4 17 ♗d3 ♘xg5 18 ♕xg5 ♘c5 ∓.

15...♘e5 16 ♘h1

Probably best, in order to reorganize by ♘f2.

16...♘fd7 17 f4?!

This exposes White's centre too much. Better is 17 ♘f2 ♘c5! =. The more ambitious 17 ♘b1 is also possible. Then following 17...♕c7 18 ♘a3, Black can respond directly by 18...c3!? 19 bxc3 ♘c5 =, hitting b3 and a4, or he can maintain equal chances by 18...♘c5 19 ♕b4 (19 ♕c2 f5! =) 19...f5 (or 19...♗d7 20 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♗xa4! =) 20 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 and ...fxe4 with equality. Instructive play: the sacrifice of the c-pawn for open lines and play against weaknesses is ubiquitous in the Benoni.

17...♘g4!

The sharpest move. 17...♘d3!? 18 ♗xd3 cxd3 19 ♘f2 ♘c5 20 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 21 ♔h1 ♗d7! produced mutual chances in Antonsen-Tseshkovsky, Copenhagen 1996.

18 ♗d4 ♘c5!

Here 18...♗xd4+ 19 ♕xd4 ♕c5 = has been suggested, but the text-move (18...♘c5!) appears even stronger, as 19 ♗xc4 (19 ♗xg7 ♘b3) 19...♘xe4 20 ♕d3 ♘xc3 21 ♕xc3 (21 ♗xc3 ♕c5+ 22 ♘f2 ♗f5) 21...♕xc3 22 bxc3 ♘e3 23 ♖fe1 ♗xd4 24 cxd4 ♗d7 yields a substantial and perhaps winning positional advantage after ...♘f5.

While they require some serious study, I don't think that these 'Half-Sämisch' lines should worry the reader. Unlike systems in other chapters (e.g., 5 and 6), White has few attacking ideas, and positionally, Black has as many effective strategies as White. In addition, Black has resort to more than one satisfactory line against each main line so that he needn't be reliant upon one tactically-dependent solution.

9 Modern Main Line

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3

Fortunately, this move (♘f3) is already in for a great many Benoni players (who use the move-order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5), because the move-order with 6 e4 g6 has some subtle transpositional problems that aren't even mentioned in the books. To begin with, 7 ♗d3 doesn't always lead to the main lines of Chapter 7 or to this chapter; for example, 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 and 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗g5 are unique and can be found at the beginning of Chapter 7. In the last line, 9 ♘f3 transposes to Line B2 of this chapter.

It is remarkable how few players have played 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 with the intent of entering the Modern Main Line by 7...♗g7 8 h3. Even fewer players have used 7 h3!? for the same purpose. After 7 h3 ♗g7, either 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘f3 or 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗d3 again sends us to Line B2. Although White hasn't yet used 6 e4 g6 7 h3 for transpositional purposes, he certainly could, and one wonders if Black can do anything to exploit this early h3. Perhaps some development involving an early ...a6 and ...♕a5 could be investigated, but for now, it appears that this is a clever way for White to bypass Line A of this chapter (assuming, once again, that he isn't already committed to ♘f3).

6...g6

Now we look at two ways for White to try to head for the Modern Main Line, which is characterized by the moves ♘f3, h3 and ♗d3:

A: 7 h3 157
B: 7 e4 161

A)

7 h3

This move aims for 7...♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3, which is Line B2 of this chapter. Black can either agree to contest those lines, or circumvent them in the following way:

7...a6

7...♕e7? fails to stop 8 e4!, due to 8...♘xe4?? 9 ♕a4+.

8 a4

8 e4 b5 will be discussed in Line B12.

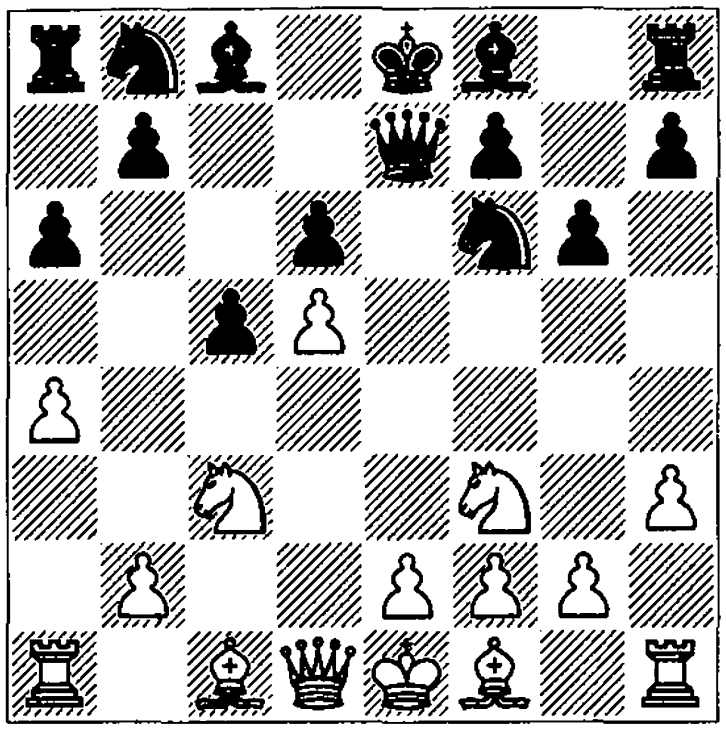
8...♕e7 *(D)*

This is a pretty comfortable line for Black. Once e4 is prevented, he can develop without worrying about a central breakthrough by his opponent.

9 ♗g5

The most common move, but not necessarily best. Alternatives:

a) 9 g3 is slow with h3 already on the board: 9...♗g7 10 ♗g2 (10 ♘d2!? ± was given by Ionescu, but 10...♘bd7!



compares favourably with line 'd') 10...0-0 (or 10...♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘d2 ♕e7 14 ♘c4 ♘d7 = Atalik-Ionescu, Mangalia 1992) 11 0-0 ♘bd7 12 ♘d2 ♘h5!? 13 ♔h2 f5! 14 f4 ♘df6 15 ♘c4 ♗d7 16 ♘b6 ♖ae8 = (control of e4) Arbakov-V.Milov, Bad Ragaz 1994.

b) 9 a5 ♘bd7 10 ♗g5 ♗g7 has no real advantages for White over the main lines after 9 ♗g5.

c) 9 ♖a3!? is a rare but interesting approach. The idea is to play 10 e4, meeting 10...♘xe4?? by 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4? 12 ♖e3. The drawback to ♖a3 is that it is not a move White would normally want in the e4/h3 system, and is probably less useful than ...♕e7. Play continues 9...♗g7 (an eccentric idea would be 9...♘bd7 10 e4 ♘e5 11 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 12 ♕f3 g5!?) 10 e4 0-0 11 ♗d3 and then:

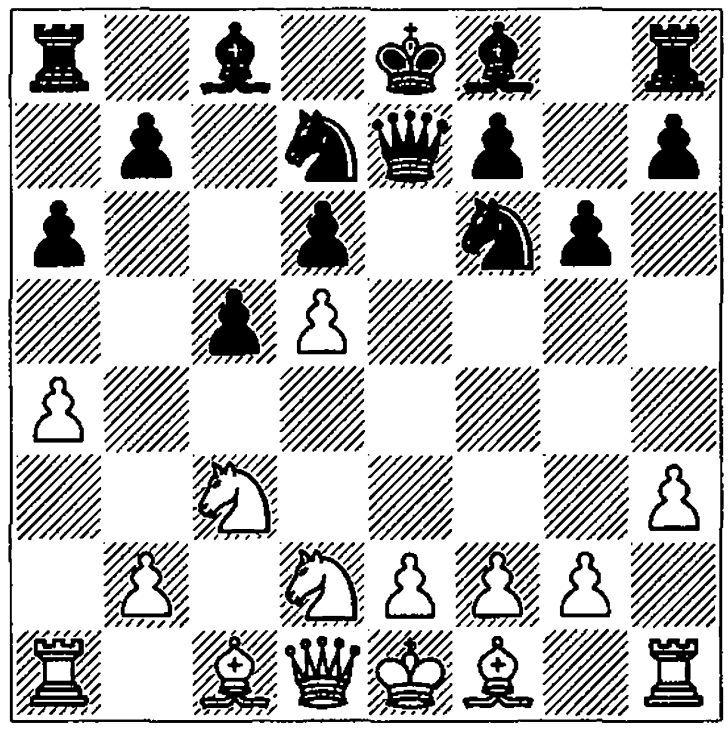
c1) 11...♘xe4!? 12 ♘xe4 f5 is risky but apparently playable:

c11) After 13 0-0 fxe4 14 ♖e1, instead of 14...♕f7, as in Sinkovics-De Sousa, Bagneux 1996, a straightforward solution is 14...♗f5 15 g4 ♕f7 16 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 17 ♖xe4 ♘d7 18 ♖f4 ♕e7 19 ♖e3 ♘e5 =.

c12) 13 ♗g5 ♕e8 (13...♗f6? 14 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15 0-0 fxe4 16 ♖e1 gives Black serious problems) 14 0-0 fxe4 15 ♖e1. Now Black should avoid 15...♗xb2? 16 ♖xe4 ♕f7 17 ♗h6!, e.g. 17...♗xa3 18 ♕a1 ♗b4? (18...♗f5 19 ♖f4 ±) 19 ♘g5 +–, but 15...♗f5! 16 ♕b1! ♕f7! 17 ♗xe4 ♘d7 looks quite satisfactory.

c2) 11...♘bd7 (safer) 12 0-0 and now, instead of 12...♘e8, Labollita-Rosito, Mar del Plata 2000, Black can equalize more smoothly by 12...♘h5!; e.g., 13 ♗g5 ♗f6 14 ♗e3 (14 ♗h6 ♖e8! 15 ♕d2 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 =) 14...♘e5. Compare Line B2 where, again, ♖a3 is not very useful.

d) 9 ♘d2 prepares ♘c4, to exploit the weakness of b6. After 9...♘bd7 *(D)*, White has two main tries:



d1) 10 ♘c4 ♘e5 11 ♘b6 ♖b8. Black isn't upset about having his problem bishop removed, and even less so with a gain of time; e.g., 12 e4!? (12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗f4 ♗g7 14 e3

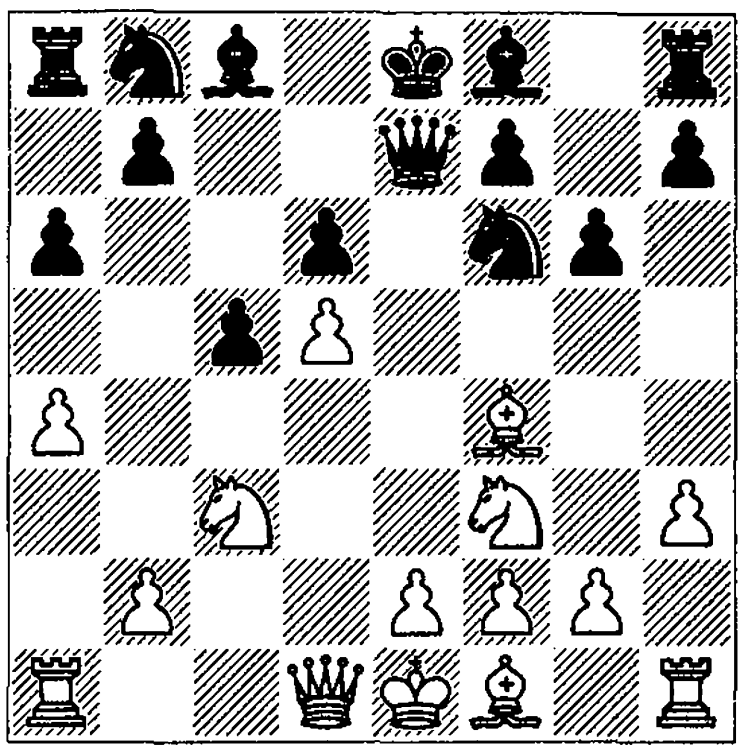
♗f5 {14...0-0 15 ♗e2 ♘fd7 =} 15 ♗e2 0-0 16 0-0 ♘fd7 17 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 18 a5 f5! = Salgado Allaria-Ionescu, Bucharest 1993) 12...♗g7 13 ♗e2 0-0 14 0-0 ♘ed7 15 ♘xc8 ♖fxc8 16 ♗f4 c4! 17 ♖e1 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖a6 ♘e5 20 b4! cxb3 21 ♕xb3 b4 22 ♘b5 ♘xe4 23 ♕xb4 ♘c3 24 ♕xd6, Shabtai-Lev, Tel-Aviv 1992, and now it looks as though 24...♘f3+! 25 ♔f1 (25 gxf3 ♘xe2+ 26 ♔f1 ♕xd6 ∓) 25...♕xd6 26 ♘xd6 ♘xe1 27 ♘xc8 ♖b1 is equal, since White must bail out with 28 ♖b6! ♖a1 29 ♖a6 ♖b1.

d2) 10 e4 ♗g7 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 is similar to a position from the Classical Main Line (see Chapter 10), but White has played the premature h3. Black has several satisfactory plans; for example, 12...♖b8 13 ♖e1 (13 a5 ♘e8 14 ♖e1 ♘c7 15 ♘c4 ♘e5!?; e.g., 16 ♘b6 ♘a8 17 ♘xc8 ♖fxc8 18 ♗e3 ♘c7 19 ♕d2 b5 20 axb6 ♖xb6 with double-edged play) 13...♘e8 14 ♗f1 ♘c7 (a standard idea, to enforce ...b5) 15 ♘c4 (15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♘xb6 =) 15...♗d4!? (15...♘e5 =) 16 ♗e3 ♗xe3 17 ♖xe3 ♘e5 18 ♘b6 ♕f6 19 ♖b1 ♘a8 20 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 21 a5 ♗d7 with comfortable equality, Brito-Franco, Asuncion 1992.

e) 9 ♗f4 *(D)* is probably better than has been indicated by the lack of mention in most sources.

Black can try several moves, but I prefer these two:

e1) 9...♘h5!? (an attractive move, since the knight is well-placed here in any case) 10 ♗g5 (10 ♗h2 ♗g7 11 ♘d2 ♘d7 12 ♘c4 ♘e5 13 ♘b6 {13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♕xe5} 13...♖b8



B

14 e4 f5; e.g., 15 ♗e2 fxe4! 16 0-0 {16 ♗xh5 ♘d3+ 17 ♔f1 0-0! 18 ♗f3 ♘xb2 ∓} 16...♘f6 with excellent play) 10...f6 11 ♗d2 f5 12 ♗g5 ♕f7!? (recommended by Stohl, although 12...♘f6 may be OK; for example, 13 ♘d2 ♗g7 14 ♘c4 0-0 15 e3 ♘bd7 16 ♗e2 ♖b8 17 0-0 ♘e5 =) 13 e4 h6 14 ♗d2 ♗g7! 15 exf5 ♗xf5 = with the idea 16 g4 ♗xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♗e4 18 gxh5? ♗xf3 ∓.

e2) 9...♘bd7 and now:

e21) 10 ♘d2 ♘e5 can lead to a fairly standard position after something like 11 e4 ♗g7 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 0-0 ♘e8 intending ...f5 and/or ...♗d7 with ...♖b8 and ...♘c7, etc. Notice that 11 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 12 ♘c4 ♕e7 13 ♘b6 ♖b8, with ...♗g7 and perhaps ...♘d7 to follow, encourages White to exchange the problem bishop on c8, as we have seen throughout this book.

e22) 10 e3 ♗g7 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♘e8 13 ♗h2 (13 e4 ♖b8 14 ♖e1 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗h6 ♘g7 17 f4 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h2 ♗d7 led to equality in Greenfeld-Psakhis, Israeli Cht 1997) 13...f5 14 ♘d2 ♘e5, and a sample line

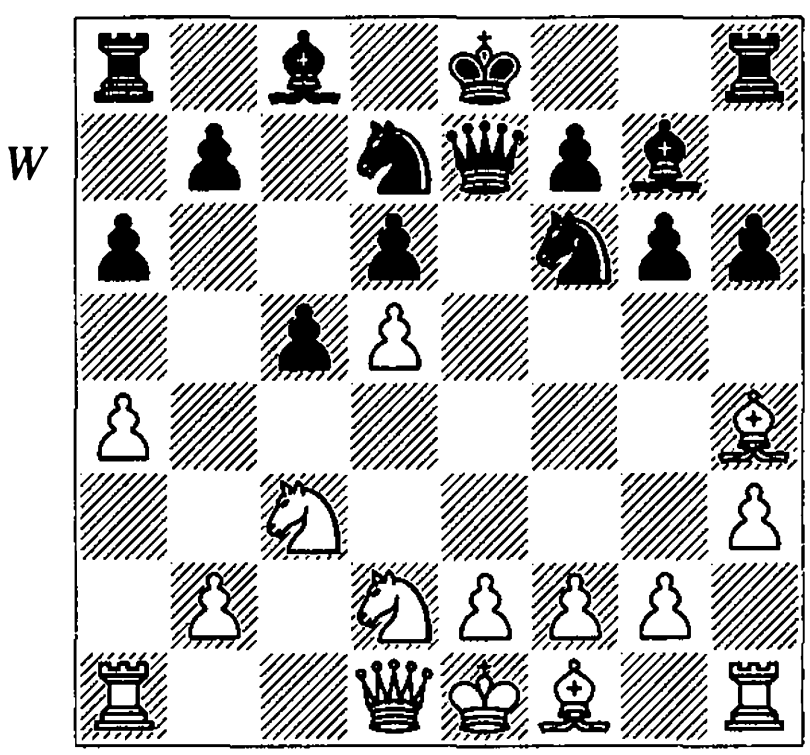
is 15 a5 ♘c7 16 ♘c4 ♘xc4 17 ♗xc4 ♗d7 18 ♕b3 ♗xc3! 19 bxc3 (19 ♕xc3 ♗b5 =) 19...♗b5 20 ♖fb1 ♖ab8 21 ♗xb5 axb5 22 c4 b4 23 ♗f4 ♖a8 =.

9...♗g7

9...♘bd7 is similar, but in some ways more flexible. The resulting play is comparable to the main line, and can complement its study:

a) 10 e3 h6 11 ♗h4 ♘e5 12 ♘d2 ♗f5! hits d3, and 13 e4 g5 14 ♗g3 is level after 14...♗g6 (or 14...♗h7, reserving the option of 16...♘g6 after 15 ♗e2 ♗g7 16 0-0) 15 ♗e2 ♗g7 =, when one idea is ...h5-h4, or ...♘fd7 intending ...h5; for example, 16 0-0 ♘fd7 17 ♖e1 h5 18 ♘f1 g4! with a serious attack.

b) 10 ♘d2 h6 11 ♗h4 ♗g7 *(D)* (here 11...♘e5 12 e4 g5 13 ♗g3 ♗f5!? resembles line 'a') and now:



b1) 12 ♘c4 ♘e5! 13 ♘b6 ♖b8 again challenges White to take the problem bishop on c8, which he logically declines: 14 e3 0-0 (or 14...g5 15 ♗g3 ♗f5 =) 15 ♗e2 ♘ed7 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 17 ♘b6 =. In Østergaard-Emms, Hillerød Politiken Cup 1995, Black tried to keep playing by 17...♕c7 and eventually won, although it is equal at this stage.

b2) 12 e3 0-0 (again, I think that 12...♘e5 intending ...♗f5 is worth a look, since 13 f4 ♘ed7 14 e4 g5! 15 fxg5 ♘h7 16 ♘c4 ♘xg5 {or 16...hxg5} 17 ♗d3 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 appears fine) 13 ♗d3 ♖b8 14 0-0 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 g5 16 ♗g3 ♘e8 (16...♗f5!?) 17 f4? (this tends to leave kingside squares weak even without the following tactic) 17...♘d3! 18 ♗xd3 ♕xe3+ 19 ♔h2 ♕xd3 20 fxg5 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 hxg5 ∓ Garza Marco-Suba, Saragossa 1999.

10 e3

10 ♘d2 ♘bd7 11 e4!? weakens White's dark squares; e.g., 11...0-0 12 ♗e2 h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♘e5 intending ...♘g6-f4.

10...h6

10...♘bd7 is comparable to the note to Black's 9th move (9...♘bd7) if White plays 11 ♘d2; instead, 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 h6 13 ♗h4 ♘e5 14 ♘d2 g5 15 ♗g3 ♗f5 gives Black perfectly good play.

11 ♗h4 ♘bd7

This move-order is preferred by John Emms. Black wants to play ...♘e5 and ...♗f5. The immediate 11...♗f5 is also reasonable, one example going 12 ♗d3 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 0-0 14 0-0 ♘bd7 15 e4 ♖fe8 16 ♖fe1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 ♗h2 ♘e5 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 with equality, Komarov-Yudasin, St Petersburg 1997.

12 ♗e2 ♘e5 13 ♘d2 g5 14 ♗g3 ♗f5

The key idea, preventing ♕c2 and clearing the back rank to connect rooks.

15 0-0

15 e4 ♗g6 (15...♗h7!?, intending ...♘fd7 and ...♘g6 at some point, has also been played) 16 0-0 0-0 17 ♖e1 ♘fd7 18 ♘f1 f5 (before ♘e3-f5 becomes a problem) 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♘d2 ♔h8 21 a5 ♕d8 22 ♘ce4 ♕c7 23 b4 cxb4 24 ♕a4 ♘c5 25 ♖ac1 and although 25...♕d7 drew quickly in Lalić-Ward, British Ch (Scarborough) 1999, 25...b5 26 ♕xb4 ♖ac8 is safer.

15...0-0 16 a5 ♖ae8!?

16...♘fd7 is probably more accurate, since the best position for the rooks is not yet known.

17 ♖e1

17 ♖a3 can be met in the same manner: 17...♕c7 (to cover b7), and if 18 f4, 18...gxf4 19 ♗xf4 ♗h7 20 e4 ♘fd7 intending ...♘g6 is equal. The e5 outpost is extremely useful for strengthening Black's dark-square control, and he may even be able to play ...f5 at some point.

After the text-move (17 ♖e1), 17...♕c7 18 e4 ♗h7 19 ♖a4 ♘fd7 = was Garcia Ilundain-Spraggett, Candas 1992. Black has a solid defensive position, and can play for ...f5.

An attractive aspect of this 8...♕e7 line is that Black's problem bishop on c8 tends to find useful employment on the h7-b1 diagonal. With correct play, Black achieves full equality and positive chances.

B)

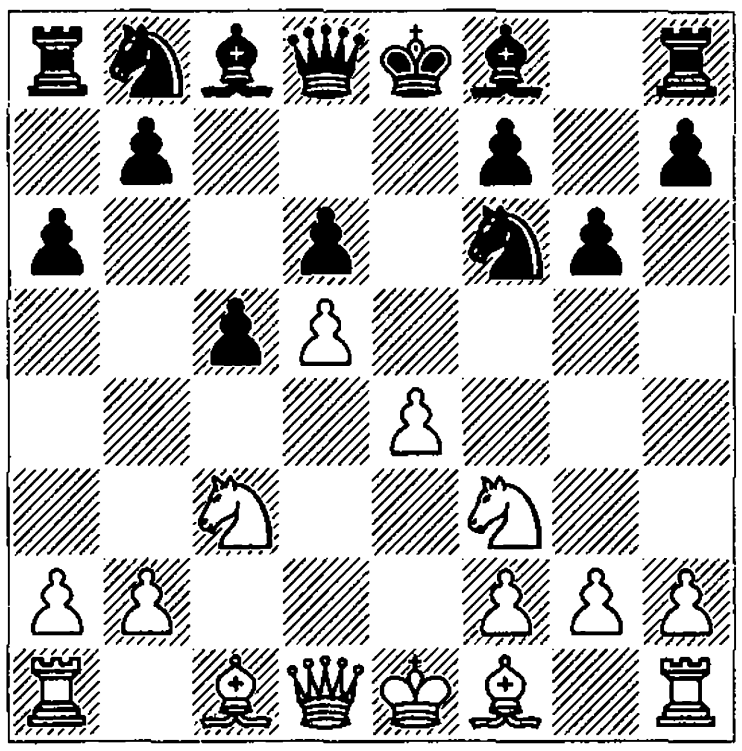
7 e4

This leads to our two repertoire choices:

B1: 7...a6 161
B2: 7...♗g7 176

B1)

7...a6 *(D)*



This is an attempt to bypass White's h3/e4/♗d3 system discussed in Line B2. Either Black gets ...b5 in, or he will be able to play 8...♗g4 after 8 a4. Several leading Benoni players have embraced this system of development in combination with the 7 h3 a6 8 a4 ♕e7 line that we examined in Line A. Thus far, the results from this method of play have been quite promising. Whatever its theoretical consequences, Black is certainly ensured of a double-edged game thereby.

Notice that the immediate 7...♗g4? falls short after 8 ♕a4+ with the idea 8...♘bd7 (8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 costs Black a tempo over standard lines) 9 ♘d2!, when White threatens f3.

After 7...a6, White has two main moves:

B11: 8 a4 162
B12: 8 h3 171

Others:

a) We have already seen 8 ♗f4 b5 in Chapter 2.

b) After 8 ♗g5, 8...b5 seems reasonable, or Black can play 8...h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5, which transposes to Line B of Chapter 3 and poses no difficulties for him.

c) 8 ♗e2 b5 already threatens ...b4 and ...♘xe4. Clearly, placing the bishop on d3 makes more sense.

d) After 8 ♗d3 b5, 9 h3 transposes to Line B12, while 9 ♗f4 is note 'c' to White's 9th move in Line B213 of Chapter 2. However, to limit Black's options, White may as well play 8 h3 first.

B11)

8 a4 ♗g4

This idea – ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3, followed by restraint on e5 – has been a terrifically successful idea against White's orthodox lines. If White plays 9 ♗e2, for example, we will reach a position that could have come directly from the Classical main lines of the next chapter. Black feels that his knights will be at least a match for White's bishops, and with the c8-bishop out of the way, it's easy to coordinate pieces and connect rooks. Finally, Black can still play for ...b5 (supported by ...♖b8 and ...♘e8-c7, for example). For his part, White has both more space and the bishop-pair (an advantage, to be sure), but finds himself searching for a plan beyond general restraint.

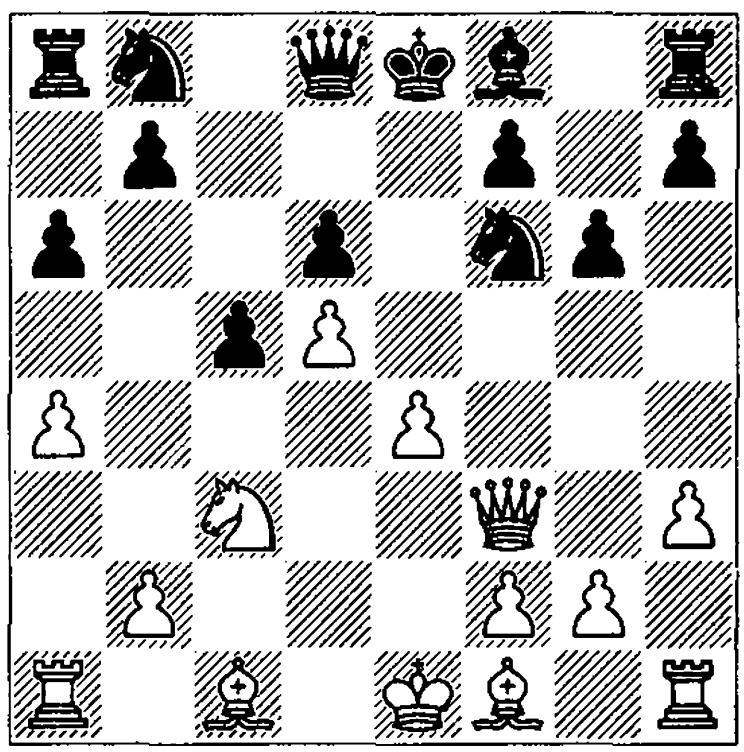
Now there are three main moves:

B111: 9 h3 162
B112: 9 ♗e2 164
B113: 9 ♕b3 168

B111)

9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 *(D)*

B



This somewhat misplaces White's queen, making it vulnerable to attack by ...♘bd7-e5. On the other hand, 10 ♕xf3 keeps the light-squared bishop on its best diagonal and therefore deserves close attention:

10...♗g7

The other option is 10...♘bd7, when 11 ♗f4 (after 11 ♕d1!, Black should transpose to the main line by 11...♗g7, since 11...♕e7?! 12 ♗d3 c4 13 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 14 0-0 favours White) 11...♕c7 12 ♗d3 ♗g7 13 0-0 0-0 intending ...♘h5 and ...♘e5 (or ...♖fe8 and ...♘e5) ensures a level game.

11 ♗d3

This is the only real test. Other moves:

a) 11 g4!? 0-0 12 ♗g2 ♘bd7 13 ♕g3 ♘e8 14 0-0 c4! 15 g5 ♘e5 =

Douven-Antonio jr, Thessaloniki OL 1988.

b) 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♘bd7 is harmless; e.g., 13 ♗f4 (13 ♗d2 ♖c8! 14 ♖ae1 c4 15 g4 ♕b6 16 ♗c1 ♘e5 {16...♕b4!?} 17 ♕e3 ♕xe3 18 ♗xe3 ♘fd7! = intending ...♘c5, Kanko-Inala, Finnish Cht 1995/6) 13...♕e7 14 ♖fe1 ♘h5! 15 ♗h2 ♗d4! (that theme again!) 16 g4!? ♘hf6 17 ♗f1 h5! 18 ♕g3 ♘e5 19 ♗e2 hxg4 20 hxg4 g5!, securing f4 with advantage, Appel-Kapengut, Budapest 1989.

11...0-0

After 11...♘bd7, 12 ♕d1 amounts to the same thing, while 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 13 ♗c2 0-0 14 0-0 allows 14...♘h5! with the plausible continuation 15 ♗h2 (15 ♗d2 ♘e5 16 ♕e2 ♕h4! =) 15...♗d4!? (15...♖fe8) 16 ♘e2 ♗e5 (or 16...♘e5 17 ♕b3 c4 18 ♕a2 ♗a7 19 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 20 ♕xc4 ♖ac8 21 ♕b3 f5! with plenty for a pawn) 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♕c3 b5 =.

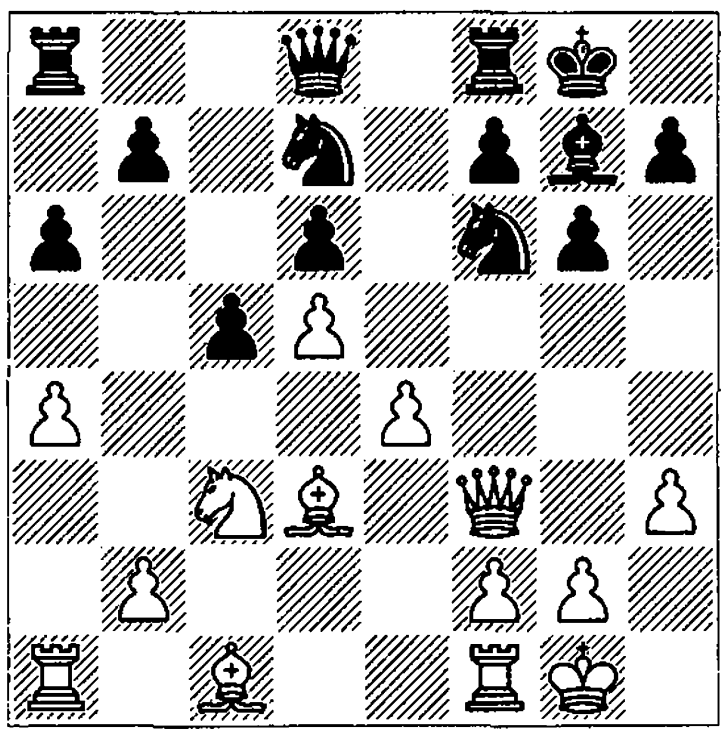
12 0-0

12 ♗f4 ♘e8 (or 12...♕e7 13 0-0 ♘bd7, when 14 ♗c2 transposes to the note to Black's 11th move, while Kapengut describes 14 ♕g3 ♘e8 as "unclear") 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♕e2!? ♖b8 15 a5 ♘e5 16 ♗c2 ♘c7 17 ♗d2 (17 ♗h2 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 ♖fb1 ♕b8 =) 17...♖e8 18 ♗a4 ♘d7 19 ♕g4 ♘e5 20 ♕e2 ♘d7 21 ♕g4 ♖e7!? 22 ♗g5 f6 23 ♗f4 ♘e5 24 ♕e2 b5 25 axb6 ♖xb6 with obscure prospects (Black might play for ...♕b8 and ...♘b5-d4), Vojska-Garcia Palermo, Saragossa 1993.

12...♘bd7 *(D)*

One could also try a different set-up that waits for ♗f4 and emphasizes the dark squares via 12...♖e8!? 13 ♗f4 ♕e7 14 ♖fe1 ♘fd7!; for example, 15 ♗f1 ♘e5 16 ♕d1 (16 ♕g3 ♘bd7 17 a5 h6 =) 16...g5!? 17 ♗e3 ♕f6 (17...♘bd7 18 ♗e2 h6 is equal) 18 f3 ♘bd7 19 a5 ♘g6 intending ...♘de5 and ...♘f4.

The text-move is more trustworthy.



13 ♕d1!

Schneider calls this "artificial" and gives it a '?', but I think it is White's most logical move, since 13 ♕e2 leads to problems on the e-file, and 13 ♕g3 ♘h5! poses Black no problems.

13...♖c8

Similar is 13...♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♖c8! (I discovered the dangers in this type of position after 14...♕c7?! 15 ♗e3! c4 16 ♗c2 ♘c5 17 ♗d4 ♕a5 18 ♖e3! ♖ac8 19 ♖a3 h6?! 20 f4 ± Sulypa-J.Watson, Linares 1999) 15 a5 (15 ♗g5 c4 16 ♗f1 h6 17 ♗h4 ♕b6 18 ♕c2 ♘h5! was already excellent for Black in Novikov-Moiseev, Berlin 1992) 15...c4 16 ♗b1 (16 ♗c2 ♖c5!? 17 ♖a4 ♖xa5 18 ♖xc4 b5 19 ♖b4 ♖a1 =) 16...♘c5 17 ♗c2 ♘fd7 18 f4 ♕h4! with active play and the advantage,

Miles-de Firmian, USA Ch (Long Beach) 1989.

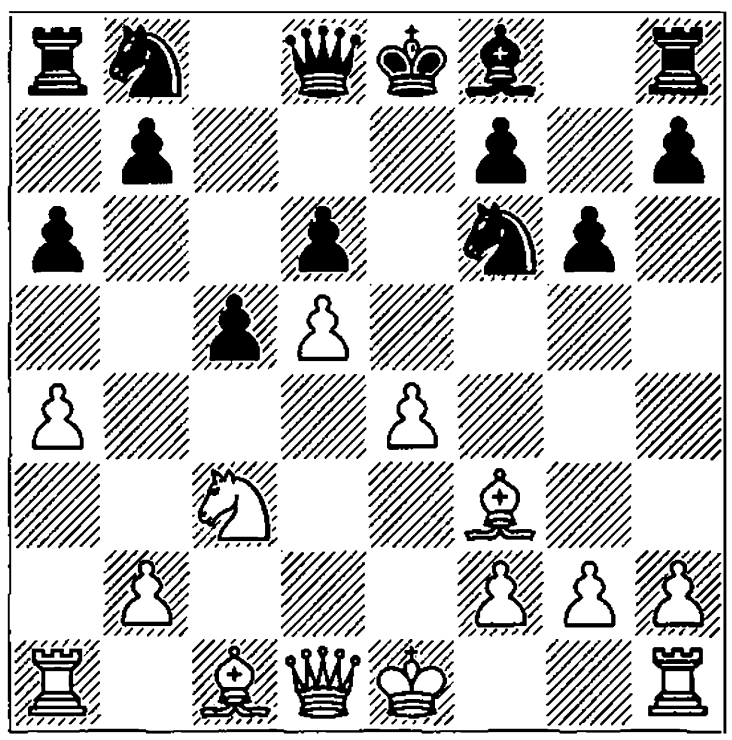
14 ♖e1

14 a5 c4 at best transposes.

14...c4 15 ♗c2

15 ♗f1 ♖e8 16 ♗f4 ♘c5 17 ♕c2 ♘b3 18 ♖ad1 ♕c7, Granda-Hulak, Zagreb IZ 1987, is already fine for Black in view of 19 e5?! dxe5 20 d6 ♕c5 21 ♘e4 ♘d4! ∓ (Granda).

After the text-move (15 ♗c2), Mandekić-Hulak, Pula 1993 continued 15...♘c5 16 a5 ♘fd7 17 f4 (to stop ...♘e5-d3) 17...♖e8 18 ♖a3 ♕c7 (also promising is 18...♘d3!? 19 ♗xd3 cxd3 20 ♕xd3 ♘c5 21 ♕d1 ♗xc3! 22 ♖xc3 ♖xe4, O.Jakobsen-Emms, Copenhagen 1994) 19 e5? dxe5 20 d6 ♕c6 21 f5 e4 ∓.


B

B112)

9 ♗e2

A natural move. Now Black will exchange on f3 and then organize a restraining policy versus White's e5. See the note to Black's 10th move regarding the transposition of this system to the Classical Main Line.

9...♗xf3

Black decides not to allow 10 ♘d2, since he wants to make this exchange anyway.

10 ♗xf3 *(D)*

10...♗g7

This is one of the key positions for the 7...a6 system, and also for the Modern Benoni. After White's next move (11 0-0), we have transposed directly to a variation that can arise via the Classical Main Line of the next chapter, i.e., 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 a6 9 a4 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3. It is important to realize that the analysis here applies to that chapter as well. In fact, this is such an effective line that one should happily employ it versus the move-order of the Classical Main Line just mentioned. As we will see in Chapter 10, White will often use other move-orders involving an early ♘d2, primarily to avoid having to face this ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3 solution. Nevertheless, since the move-order given above also arises regularly, that gives us all the more reason to learn it.

As a possible alternative for Black, 10...♘bd7 tends to lead to the same position, except in the case of 11 ♗f4 ♕b8!? 12 0-0 ♗g7 13 ♗e2 0-0 14 ♕c2 ♖e8 15 ♗g3 (15 h3 ♕c7 16 a5 ♖e7 17 ♖a4 ♖ae8 18 ♖fa1 b5! 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 ♖xa6 ♘xe4 = Rai.Garcia-Soos, Havana OL 1966) 15...♕c7 16 f4 c4 17 ♔h1 ♖ac8 18 a5 ♕d8! =, intending ...♖c5 and ...♖xa5, Wexler-Bronstein, Mar del Plata 1960.

11 0-0

11 ♕b3 b6 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 0-0 ♘e8 = Sorin-de Firmian, Buenos Aires 1995.

11...0-0

Some may prefer playing 11...♘bd7 (to avoid 12 e5). This normally transposes except in the case of 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 13 e5!? (13 ♖e1 0-0 transposes to our main line) 13...dxe5 14 d6 ♕e6 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕f6 17 ♗g3 ♖b8 18 f4 e4! 19 ♗xe4 0-0, Calego-Franco, Linares 1991, which Psakhis says is "unclear". Black appears to have some trouble coping with the bishops, but 20 ♖b1 ♕d4+ 21 ♕xd4 ♗xd4+ 22 ♔h1!? (22 ♗f2 ♖fe8 =) 22...♘b6! (covering d5) 23 f5 (23 b3 f5 24 ♗f3 ♖fd8) 23...♘xa4 24 d7 ♖bd8 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 ♗d6 ♖xd7 is at least adequate.

12 ♗f4

The main line in this much-played position. Others:

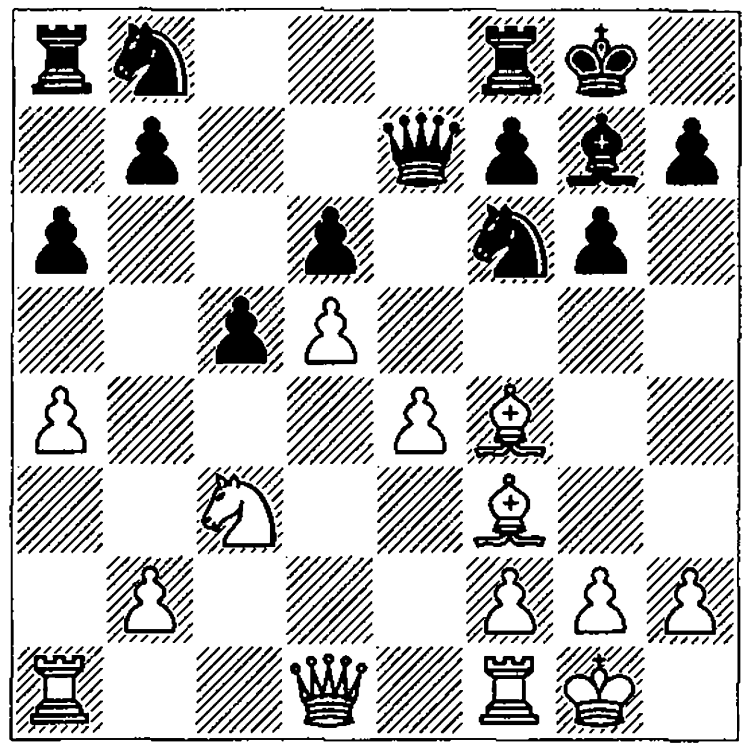
a) 12 e5!? dxe5 13 ♗g5 (13 d6 ♘c6) 13...♘bd7 14 a5! h6! 15 ♗h4 ♖b8 16 d6 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘e8 ∓ intending ...f5, V.Mikhalevski-Yudasin, Beersheba 1992.

b) 12 ♗g5 ♖e8 (12...h6 13 ♗h4 ♘bd7 forces White's bishop to commit sooner) 13 ♕c2 ♘bd7 14 ♗e2 h6 15 ♗h4 ♕a5! 16 ♔h1 ♖ac8 17 f3 c4 = Beliavsky-Suba, Tunis IZ 1985.

c) 12 a5 ♘bd7 13 ♖a4!? (or 13 ♗f4 ♕e7, when 14 ♖e1 transposes to the main line, 14 ♕d2 to note 'b' to White's 13th move, 14 ♕c2 to note 'c2' to White's 13th move and 14 ♕b3 to note 'd1' to White's 13th move) 13...♘e8 14 ♗e2 ♘c7 15 ♕c2 ♕e7 16 ♗d2 ♖fb8! = 17 b3 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 with the idea of ...♖ab8 and ...♘b5-d4, Pinter-Psakhis, Paris 1990.

d) 12 ♕c2 ♘bd7 13 ♗d2!? was successful for White in Pinter-Emms, Copenhagen 1995 after 13...♖e8 14 a5 ♖c8 15 ♖fe1 c4 16 ♗e2 ♘e5 17 ♘a4, but I prefer the standard plan chosen by Wojtkiewicz in a similar position: 13...♕e7 14 a5 ♘e8! 15 ♖fe1 ♘c7 16 ♖a3 ♖ab8 17 ♗e2 ♖fe8 18 ♗f1 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 =.

12...♕e7 *(D)*



13 ♖e1

Considered best. Other moves are interesting (or critical, in the case of 13 e5), but none of them threaten the soundness of Black's system:

a) 13 e5 dxe5 14 d6 ♕e6 15 ♖e1 (after 15 ♗g5, 15...♖d8! = looks rather easier than 15...♘bd7 16 ♗xb7 ♖a7 =, as has been played) 15...♘bd7 16 ♗xb7 ♖a7! (16...♖ab8!? 17 ♗xa6 ♖xb2 18 ♗b5, Hjartarson-de Firmian, Reykjavik 1984, and now Kapengut suggests 18...♖b4!?) 17 ♗c6 (17 ♗f3 ♖b8 18 ♘d5 ♕xd6 19 ♗g5 ♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♕f8! is slightly better for Black, Browne-D.Gurevich, New York 1984) 17...♖b8 18 ♕d2 (18 ♗xe5? ♘xe5 19 f4 ♘xc6! 20 ♖xe6 fxe6 ∓ Vermiash-Pinchuk, corr. 1997) 18...♖b6! 19 ♘d5,

C.Hansen-Y.Grünfeld, Thessaloniki OL 1984, and here just 19...♕xd6! appears very strong, as 20 ♘xb6 ♕xc6 leaves White with two pieces hanging.

b) 13 ♕d2 can be met in several ways, but an instructive example arose from 13...♘bd7 14 a5 h5!? (a recurring theme in the Benoni, especially when White has bishops on f3 and f4 – Black will often play ...♘h7, in order to threaten ...g5-g4, but he also has ...♘g5 in some cases; a more conventional equalizer is 14...♖ab8 15 ♗e2 ♘e8 intending ...♘c7 and ...b5) 15 h3 (to prevent ...♘g4, another idea behind ...h5) 15...♖ab8 (15...♖ac8 16 ♖fe1 c4 17 ♘a4 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 was equal in Gaprindashvili-Madl, Smederevska Palanka wom IZ 1987) 16 ♖a2 ♘h7 17 ♖e1 ♖fe8 18 ♗e2 ♗d4! 19 ♖a4 ♘hf6 = Ruban-Emms, Hastings 1991/2.

c) 13 ♕c2 ♘bd7 and now:

c1) 14 ♗e2 ♘e8 15 a5 ♘c7 16 ♖fe1 ♖ab8 (a familiar manoeuvre!) 17 ♖a4 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 = Velikov-Ermenkov, Albena 1983.

c2) 14 a5 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 ♘fd7 16 ♗e3, Lukacs-Groszpeter, Kecskemet 1983, and now Black might try the unclear 16...g5!?.

c3) 14 h3 ♖ab8 15 a5 ♘e8 16 ♖fe1 ♘c7 17 ♗e2 b5 = Krush-Scherbakov, Presov 2000.

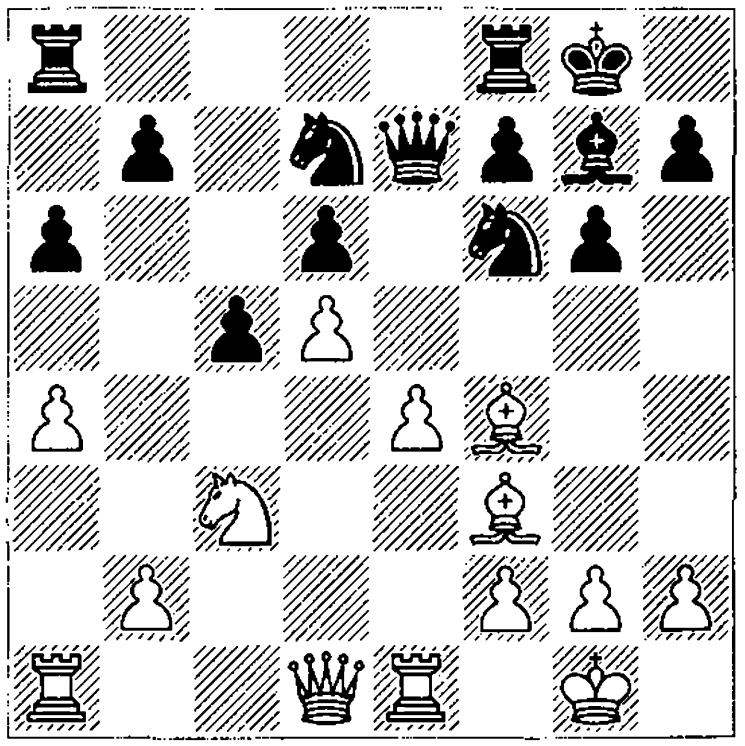
c4) 14 ♖ae1 c4!? 15 ♗e2 ♖ac8 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗h4 g5!? (17...♖fe8, intending 18 f4 b5!?) 18 ♗g3 ♖fe8 = Agzamov-Psakhis, Baku 1979; on 19 a5, simplest is 19...♘e5.

d) 13 ♕b3!? has been tested recently: 13...♘bd7! and then:

d1) 14 a5 ♖ab8 15 ♘a4 h5! 16 ♘b6 ♘e8 with comfortable play for Black, Roa Alonso-Topalov, Villarrobledo rpd 2000.

d2) 14 ♕xb7 ♖fb8 15 ♕c6 ♘e8!? (15...♘e5 16 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 "with some compensation" – Emms) 16 ♗g4 (16 a5 ♗e5! Emms) 16...♘e5 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 18 f4 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕d8 20 e5 f5! 21 exf6 (21 ♗f3 ♖b6 –+) 21...♘xf6 22 ♗e6+ ♔h8 23 a5 ♖xb2 24 ♘a4 and now 24...♖bb8, as played in Pilar-Meduna, Czech League 1997/8, is OK, but 24...♖b5! is more active and looks somewhat better for Black.

13...♘bd7 *(D)*



14 a5

Or:

a) 14 h3 is well-suited to counter ...h5, but it is also slow and can be answered by the standard plan to prepare ...b5: 14...♖ab8 15 ♗e2 ♘e8 16 ♕d2 ♘c7 17 ♗g5!? ♗f6 18 ♗h6 ♖fe8 = Portisch-Kindermann, Dubai OL 1986.

b) 14 ♕d2 ♖fe8 (again, the dynamic 14...h5 looks quite playable: 15 ♗h6 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♗xh6 17 ♕xh6

♘fg4 18 ♗xg4 hxg4 19 h3 ♕f6 = Šahović-Vera, Aosta 1989) and now:

b1) 15 h3 c4 (15...♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♕c7 17 ♗h2 c4 18 ♔h1 ♖ab8 19 f4 ♘ed7 20 ♗f3 b5 21 axb5 axb5 = Ehlvest-de Firmian, New York 1997) 16 ♗e2 ♖ac8 17 ♗f1 ♘e5 18 ♗h6 ♗xh6 19 ♕xh6 ♕c7 20 ♕d2 ♘ed7 21 a5 ♕d8 = intending ...♖c5xa5, Gligorić-Suba, Vršac 1983.

b2) 15 a5 h5! 16 h3 ♖ac8 (or again, 16...♘h7; e.g., 17 ♖a3 ♕f6 18 ♘a4 g5 19 ♗h2 ♕g6 20 ♗d1 ♗d4 21 ♗c2 ♘e5 intending ...g4 or just ...♘f6, Hjartarson-Suba, Manila OL 1992) and then:

b21) 17 b3 ♘h7! 18 ♖ac1 ♗d4 19 ♗e3 ♗f6! 20 ♗f4 ♘g5 (20...♗g5! = looks more accurate, leaving White with some structural problems and a bad bishop) and now, rather than 21 ♕e2? ♘e5 22 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 ∓ 23 ♘d1? ♘xh3+ –+ Henrichsen-Emms, Copenhagen 1993, Graham Burgess notes that 21 ♗d1! ultimately works out tactically if Black grabs the e-pawn by 21...♗xc3?! 22 ♖xc3 ♘xe4? 23 ♖ce3. Still, 21...♕d8! isn't bad, when the e-pawn really is threatened, and 22 f3 ♕e7 = gives Black dark-square weaknesses to work on after ...♘h7.

b22) After 17 ♗d1!, 17...c4 18 ♗c2 ♘e5 19 ♗e3 ♘fd7 20 ♘a4 ♘d3! 21 ♗xd3 cxd3 22 ♘b6 ♘xb6 23 ♗xb6 ♖c2 24 ♕xd3 ♖ec8 yielded compensation in C.Hansen-Ward, Copenhagen 1996. 17...♘h7 should also be considered, as in line 'b21'.

14...h5 *(D)*

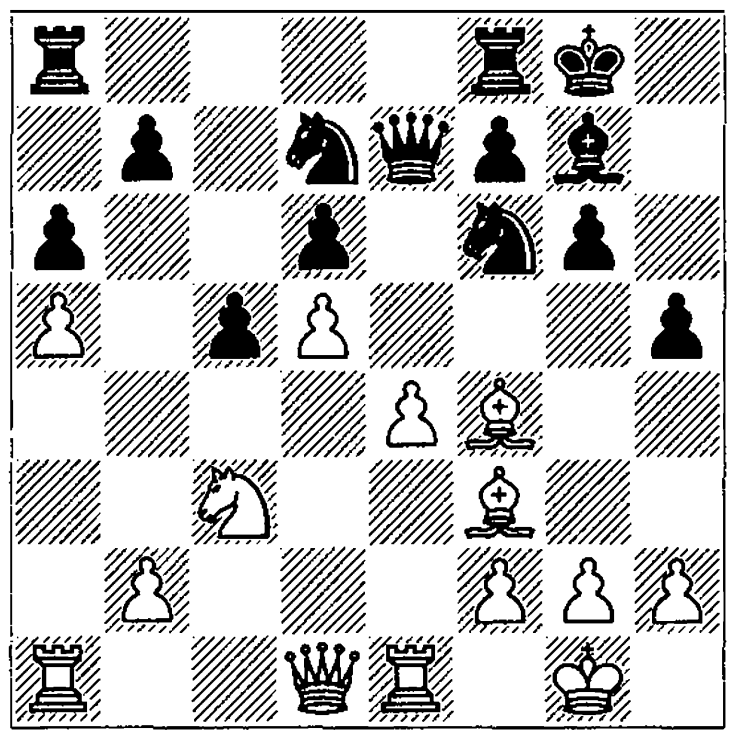
Just about every possibility has been tried here, mostly without many problems for Black. Two instructive lines:

a) 14...♖fe8 and then:

a1) 15 h3!? can be answered by 15...♖ac8!, intending ...c4. Instead, 15...♖ab8 16 ♗e2 b5 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 ♖xa6 ♘xe4 19 ♗d3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♖xa6 21 ♗xa6 ♕h4 22 ♕f3 f5 was unclear and probably equal in Gershon-Marin, Tel-Aviv 2000.

a2) 15 ♕d2 h5!? 16 h3 ♘h7 17 ♖a3 ♕f6 18 ♘a4 g5 19 ♗h2 ♕g6 = Hjartarson-Suba, Manila OL 1992, based upon 20 ♕d1 ♘hf6! 21 ♗xd6 g4 22 hxg4 hxg4 23 ♗e2 ♘xe4 =.

b) 14...♘e5 15 ♗e2 ♖fe8 16 ♗g3 g5! 17 ♖a4 (17 ♕d2!? intending ♘d1-e3-f5) 17...♘fd7 18 ♗f1 ♘g6 with dark-square control, Barlov-de Firmian, Novi Sad OL 1990.



15 ♘a4

Or:

a) 15 g3!? ♖ab8 16 ♘a4 ♘e8 17 ♖c1 ♕d8! 18 ♕d2 b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 = Gligorić-Psakhis, Sarajevo 1986. I prefer Black's dynamism after the game continuation 20 ♘xc5!? dxc5 21

♗xb8 ♕xb8 22 ♖xc5 ♘d6, although this may be a matter of taste.

b) 15 h3 can be answered by the ever-reliable 15...♖ab8 16 ♗e2 ♘e8 17 ♕d2 ♘c7; e.g., 18 ♗d3 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 20 ♖a2 ♖fb8 =, after which 21 ♖ea1 ♖b4 22 ♕c1 ♘e5 23 ♗e2 ♘c4 = might follow.

15...♘h7

Black threatens ...g5-g4.

16 ♗d2 ♘g5!

Showing yet another idea behind the ...h5, ...♘h7 manoeuvre: one of White's bishops is traded, or the e-pawn falls.

Now:

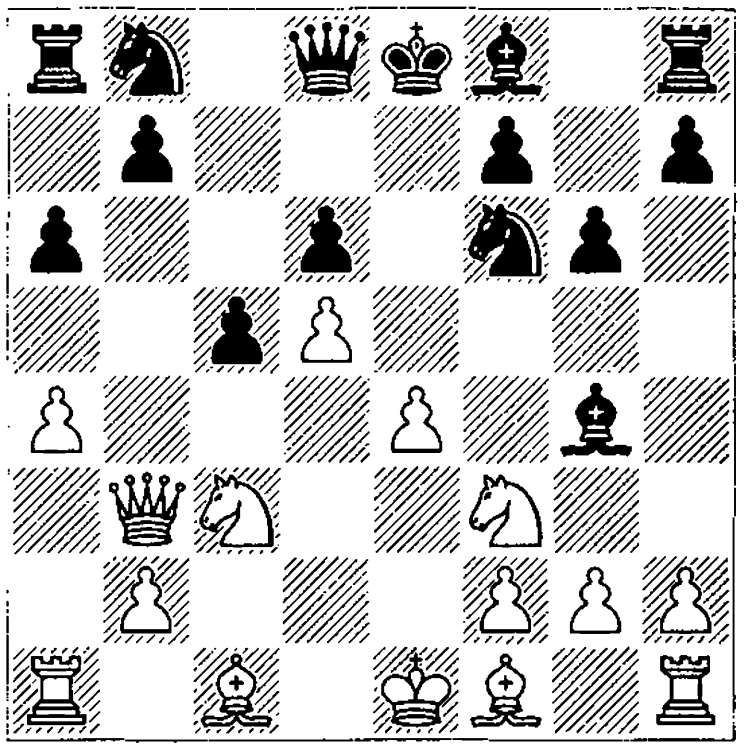
a) 17 g3 ♘xf3+ ½-½ Beliavsky-Psakhis, USSR Ch (Minsk) 1987. Black's position seems preferable.

b) 17 ♗e2 ♘xe4 18 ♗d3 f5 19 f3 ♗d4+ (19...♘e5!? 20 ♗xe4 fxe4 21 ♖xe4 ♕f7 22 ♘b6 ♖ae8 also looks OK) 20 ♗e3 ♗xe3+ 21 ♖xe3 ♕g7! 22 ♗xe4 (22 fxe4 ♕d4 –+) 22...♖ae8! with full equality.

This has been a long overview of a crucial variation that can be used against both the Modern and Classical main lines of the Benoni. By reviewing this section, one can see why White has for the most part been avoiding the ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3 variation. Black's blockade on e5 is firm, and he has chances on both sides of the board. In particular, the idea of ...h5 and ...♘h7 has confirmed that White has practical difficulties in a variation which only promises equality anyway.

B113)

9 ♕b3 *(D)*


B

This is White's most tactical and forcing move, which virtually wins a pawn by force, since 9...♗c8 is pathetic and 9...♕c7 10 ♘d2! prepares f3, ♘c4 and ♗f4. Then Black has lost two tempi over normal lines. This leaves:

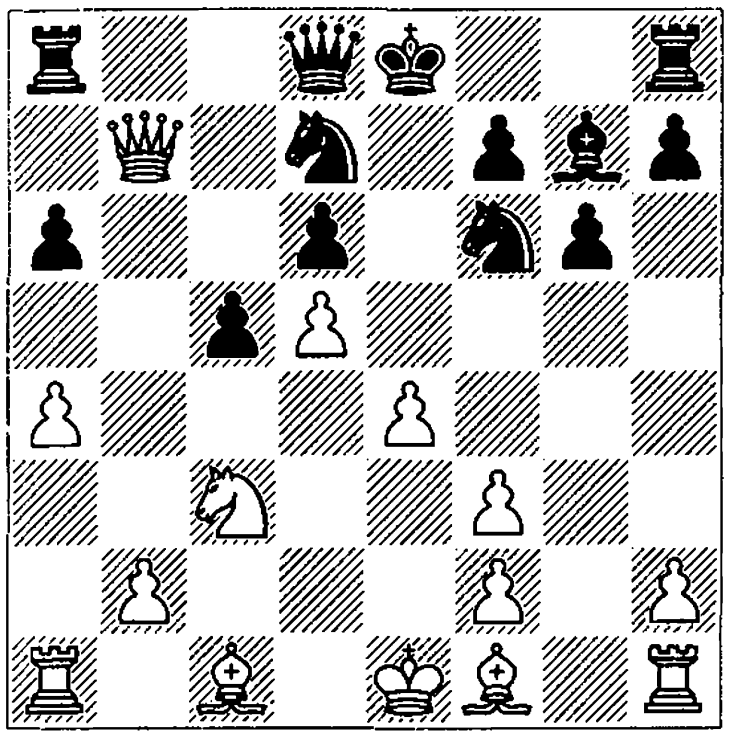
9...♗xf3 10 ♕xb7

10 gxf3 ♕e7!? (a straightforward solution is just 10...♕c7! 11 a5 ♘bd7 with easy play) 11 ♗f4 ♘h5 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♕xb7 ♗h6! 14 ♗b5+! ♔f8 15 ♗e2 ♔g7 16 ♕xa8 ♕b6 17 ♖b1 ♘f4 with dark-square control and a lot of (but not necessarily enough) compensation, Molvig-Emms, Copenhagen 1996.

10...♗xg2

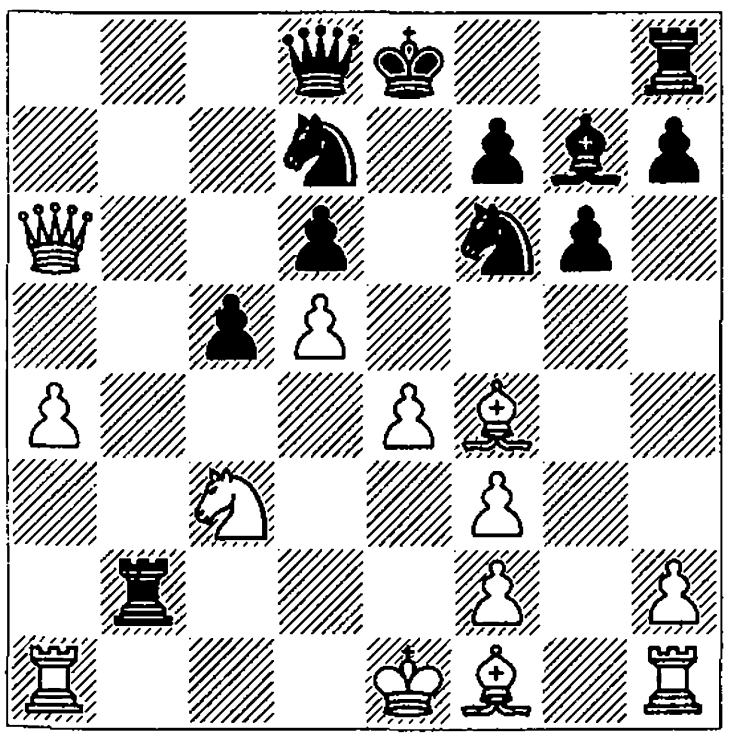
This position is a joy to analyse, and a paradigm of attacking chess. The text-move is the straightforward approach, but 10...♘bd7 can be great fun and is probably the best move. 11 gxf3 ♗g7 *(D)* and then:

a) 12 ♗xa6 ♖b8 13 ♕c6 0-0 14 a5 (14 ♕xd6? ♖b6) 14...♘e5 15 ♕a4 ♘xf3+ 16 ♔f1 ♘g4! 17 h3!? ♕h4 18 ♕c2 ♘d4 with a huge attack.



b) 12 ♕b3 ♘h5! (with the idea ...♕h4) 13 h4 ♗e5 14 ♗g5 ♕a5 15 ♗d2 ♗f4 16 ♕c2 ♕d8 17 ♘d1 ♘e5, again with complete dark-square control, Kurz-Emms, Baden-Baden 1992.

c) 12 ♗f4!? (this position can arise in several ways) 12...♖b8 13 ♕xa6 ♖xb2! *(D)* (I find this move fascinating, and it may even be objectively better than 13...♘h5 14 ♗c1! 0-0 15 ♗e2 ♗e5 with compensation, Van Wely-Topalov, Amsterdam 1997).



Here are some engaging possibilities:

c1) 14 ♗b5 ♘h5 15 ♗d2 (15 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 16 ♗d2 0-0 intending moves like ...♕h3, ...♗d4 and ...f5) 15...0-0 16 ♕xd6?? (but 16 ♖a3 ♘e5 17 ♘d1 ♖xd2! 18 ♔xd2 ♕g5+ 19 ♔c2 ♕g2 20 ♖e1 ♘xf3 21 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 22 ♕xd6 ♗d4! with the idea ...♕a3 favours Black) 16...♕a5! 17 ♘b1 (17 ♕a6 ♕b4 18 ♖c1 ♘e5! –+) 17...♖xd2 18 ♘xd2 ♗xa1 19 ♔e2 ♗e5 20 ♕xd7 ♘f4+ –+.

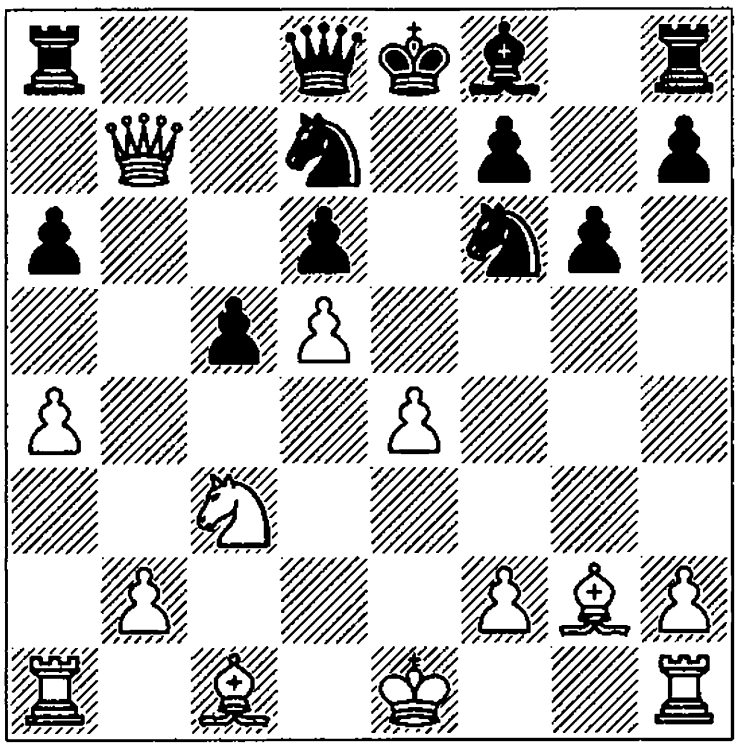
c2) 14 ♘b5 0-0 15 ♗e2 (15 ♖d1? ♘xe4! 16 fxe4 ♕h4 17 ♗e3 ♕xe4 18 ♖g1 ♕b4+ with a killing attack; 15 ♗g5 ♖e8 16 ♗g2 h6 17 ♗xf6 {17 ♗e3? ♘xd5! –+} 17...♗xf6 18 0-0 ♗e5 ∓, for example, 19 ♕c6? ♘b8! 20 ♕c7 ♕h4 21 h3 ♕f4 22 ♖fb1 ♖c2! –+) 15...♘xd5 (or 15...♘h5; e.g., 16 ♗xd6?! ♕f6 {threatening ...♘f4} 17 ♕a5 ♖xb5 18 axb5 ♕xd6 with terrific activity for Black's minor pieces) 16 exd5 ♕h4 17 ♕xd6 ♖e8 18 0-0 (18 ♗d2 ♖xd2 19 ♔xd2 ♕b4+) 18...♖bxe2 19 ♘c7! ♗e5 20 ♗xe5 ♖8xe5! 21 ♕xd7 ♖g5+ 22 ♔h1 ♖h5 23 ♕c8+ ♔g7 24 h3 ♖f5 25 ♔g2 ♖g5+ 26 ♔h1 ♖xf2 –+.

d) 12 ♕c6! 0-0 13 ♕xd6 ♘h5 and now:

d1) 14 ♗h3 is given as '! ±' by Psakhis and Kapengut, but Schneider refutes that assessment by 14...f5 15 ♕e6+ ♔h8 16 d6 ♘e5! 17 ♔e2 ♕h4 18 ♗g2 ♘d3! (Schneider also claims an "immediate win" by 18...fxe4 19 ♘xe4 ♖ae8 20 ♕d5 ♘g4 21 ♕xc5 ♖xe4+, but 22 fxe4! is at best unclear) 19 ♔xd3 ♕xf2 "∓ with a powerful attack". Then 20 ♖d1 ♕xg2 is complex, but promising for Black.

d2) Gavrikov-Lutikov, Minsk 1981 went 14 f4 ♖e8 15 ♗g2 ♖a7! (threatening 16...♗f8 17 ♕c6 ♘b8, and preparing ...♕h4) 16 a5 ♕h4 17 ♘a4 ♖c8! 18 ♘b6 ♗f8 '∓' Kapengut, and indeed, 19 ♘xc8 ♗xd6 20 ♘xd6 ♘xf4 is quite good for Black.

11 ♗xg2 ♘bd7 *(D)*



12 0-0

Probably best. Otherwise:

a) 12 ♕c6 was long considered good, but then 12...♗e7! is at least adequate; e.g., 13 e5!? (13 ♗f4 ♕b8 14 ♗h3 ♖a7 =) 13...♖c8 14 exf6? (14 ♕xa6 ♘xe5 =) 14...♖xc6 15 fxe7 ♕xe7+ 16 ♔d1 ♖b6 and Black wins, Olafsson-de Firmian, Reykjavik 1994.

b) 12 ♗f4?! ♘h5 13 ♗h3 f5 14 ♗g5 ♖b8! 15 ♗xd8 ♖xb7 16 ♗a5 ♘e5 17 ♗f1, Najdorf-Camarra, Mar del Plata 1961. This must be the stem game for 9 ♕b3. Now Kapengut suggests 17...♖xb2 18 ♖a2 ♖xa2 19 ♘xa2, and here instead of his 19...♗h6?, Schneider proposes 19...fxe4! 20 ♗xa6 ♘f6 (20...♔e7!?) 21 ♘c3 ♗h6 22 ♗b5+ ♔e7 ∓.

c) 12 ♗h3 ♘e5 13 0-0 (Vezzosi-Gardon, Toscana 1999) 13...♕b8! ∓.

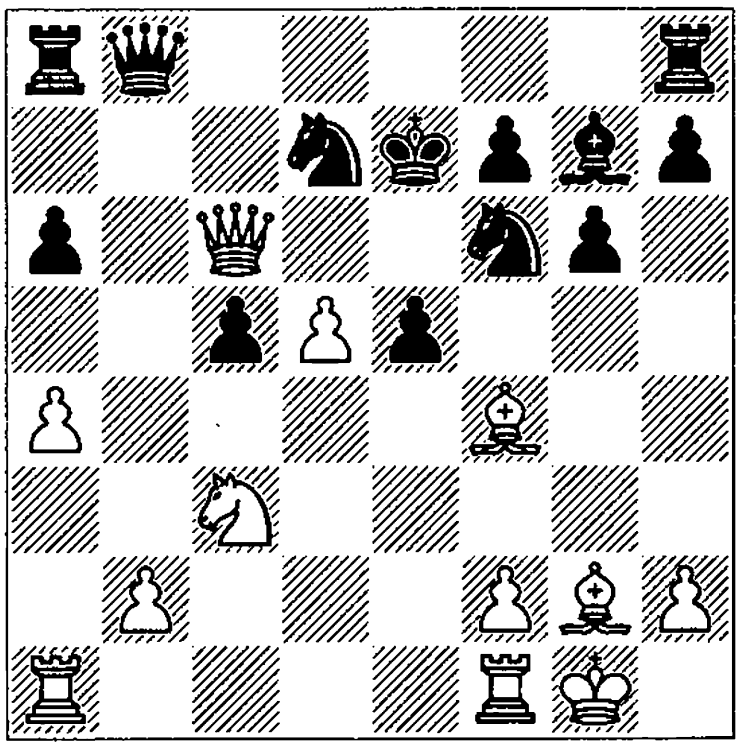
12...♕b8!?

Perhaps not thrilled with this move (see the note to White's 16th move, for example), Black has often turned to 12...♗e7 of late: 13 f4 0-0 14 e5 (the recent 14 a5 ♖e8 {14...c4!?} 15 ♕c6 can be answered by 15...♕b8!; e.g., 16 ♖a2 ♕a7 17 ♔h1 ♖ac8 18 ♕a4 ♗f8 =, having in mind both ...♗g7 and ...c4) 14...dxe5 15 d6 ♗xd6 16 ♕xa8 ♕xa8 17 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 18 a5 (18 fxe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗f4 ♗d4+ was equal in Murdzia-Yakovich, Swidnica 1999) 18...♖e8 19 ♖a4 ♔g7 20 ♖d1 ♖e6 ∓ (White's pawns are loose) Crouch-Emms, British Ch (Millfield) 2000. 12...♗e7 offers greater winning chances than 12...♕b8, as we shall see.

13 ♕c6 ♗g7 14 ♗f4 ♔e7!

Threatening ...♖c8.

15 e5 dxe5 *(D)*



16 ♖fe1!

White can win the exchange but achieve little by 16 d6+ ♕xd6 17 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 18 ♖fd1+ ♔c7 19 ♗xa8

♖xa8 =. More interesting is the untested 16 ♗g5, which comes close to gaining the advantage, although it's not clear how after 16...♖a7 17 d6+ ♕xd6 18 ♘d5+ ♔e6 19 ♗h3+ ♘g4 20 ♘e7! (20 ♗xg4+ f5) 20...f5 21 ♖fd1 ♕xc6 22 ♘xc6 ♖c7 23 ♘d8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗xd8 ♖c8, when it appears that Black has enough compensation for the exchange. This kind of thing may well be the reason players are turning to 12...♗e7, however.

16...♖d8! 17 d6+

Komarov analyses 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 f4 ♘fd7 19 d6+! ♕xd6! 20 ♘d5+ ♔e6 21 ♘c7+ ♔e7 = with the point that 22 ♕xd6+? loses to 22...♔xd6 23 ♘xa8 ♘c6! –+.

After the text-move (17 d6+), Komarov-Foisor, Lyons 1995 continued 17...♕xd6 18 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 19 ♖ad1+ ♔e6 20 ♗g5!? h6 21 ♘d5 (the alternative 21 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 gives Black two pawns for the exchange and counterplay via ...♖b8) 21...hxg5 22 ♘c7+ ♔e7 23 ♗xa8 (23 ♘xa8 ♖b8!) 23...♖c8! 24 ♘d5+ ♘xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♘b6! (or 25...f5 = with an aggressive centre) 26 a5 ♘a4; this is still unclear – a great struggle.

But for more positive chances, Black should deviate from the main line given here by 10...♘bd7 (which I think is objectively superior to 10...♗xg2), or 12...♗e7. Generally speaking, I would be surprised if White continues to enter into these 9 ♕b3 lines unless he can improve at an early stage.

B12)

8 h3

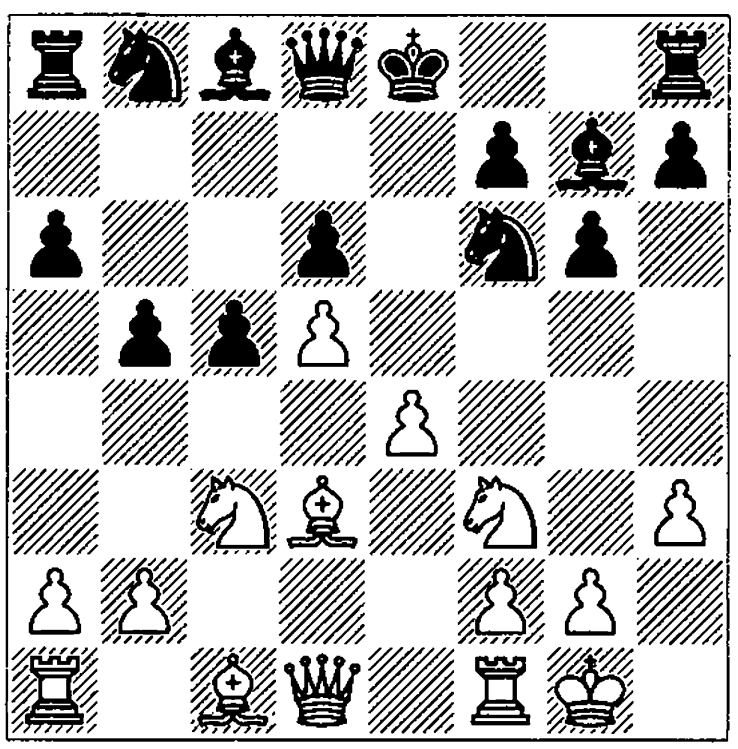
Even if 8 ♗d3 b5 9 h3 leads to the same position, there's no reason to allow Black to deviate on move 8.

8...b5 9 ♗d3

Black threatened ...b4 and ...♘xe4.

9...♗g7 10 0-0 *(D)*

B



10...0-0

A key position, one which theory has held to be perfectly good for Black – see, e.g., *NCO*, *MCO*, *ECO*, Kapengut, Psakhis, and Schneider (who even gives White a '?!' for entering the position). But recently, White has been making progress in this line, especially against the known remedies, so the variation deserves a detailed examination.

In my opinion, Black should not in general play the move ...c4 early on, at the least not before he has all his minor pieces and a rook in play. The cost of giving up the d4-square seems too great in most cases. I'm sure that there are exceptions to this, but I haven't found a convincing one.

On the positive side, Black seems to do quite well by leaving the pawns on

b5 and c5 for a while as he develops his pieces. In principle, a drawback might be the move b4, which attempts to block Black's queenside advance. But in practice, White is seldom successful with that move, if only because it helps Black to open lines on the side of the board where he is stronger. Thus, b4 may be considered about an even bargain at best, and one which costs White time to implement.

I should also point out that Black makes the rather ugly move ...♗b7 in most games involving this variation. It's true that the bishop normally has nowhere else to go, but it also serves an important prophylactic function versus e5, White's most natural break. The proper disposition of Black's rooks tends to be a more complicated question: they may end up on c8 or b8 (supporting a queenside pawn advance), on d8 (guarding against e5), or on e8, exerting pressure down the e-file.

In line with the explanation above, 10...c4 11 ♗c2 0-0 is unnecessarily committal, ceding d4 to a bishop or knight before developing. Black can always play this later.

11 ♗f4

A difficult choice, since the same position can arise by several move-orders, and yet Black can react differently to each:

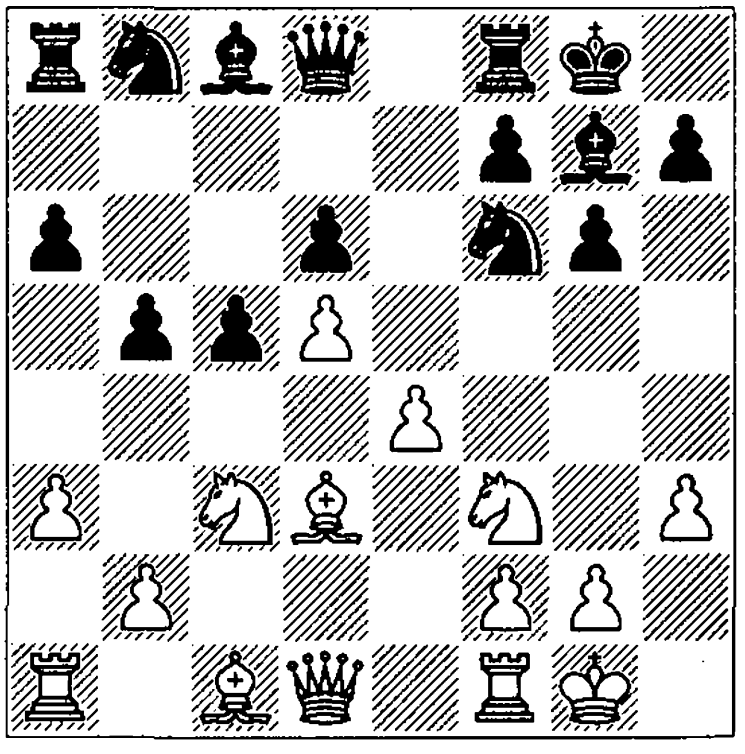
a) 11 ♖e1 is somewhat less direct than 11 ♗f4, but it is still something that White will play soon in most lines: 11...♘bd7 (a move that is prevented by ♗f4; 11...♖e8 12 ♗f4 transposes to the main line), and now White has a choice:

a1) 12 ♗f4 ♘e8 (an option not available to Black in some other lines; 12...♕b6 transposes to the main line) 13 ♕d2 (13 ♗g5!? ♗f6 14 ♗h6 ♗g7 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 a3 ♘e5 17 ♗f1 is slightly better for White, Sammalvuo-Petersen, Copenhagen 1998) 13...♗b7 14 ♗h6 (14 a3!?) 14...♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 ♕f6 16 ♗f1!? ♕g7 17 ♕d2 ♖d8 18 a3 ♘ef6 = O.Jakobsen-Moskalenko, Copenhagen 1995. Prophylaxis versus e5.

a2) 12 a4!? b4 (12...c4?! 13 ♗f1 b4 14 ♘a2) 13 ♘b1 a5! 14 ♘bd2 (14 ♗f4!? looks more promising at first, because then ♘bd2 won't block the bishop, but 14...♘b6 threatening ...♘h5 is fine) 14...♘b6 15 ♖a2 ♗a6 16 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 17 b3 ♖a7 18 ♗b2 ♖e8 19 ♕a1!?, Psakhis-Spraggett, Barcelona 1993, and now Kapengut analyses 19...♘h5 20 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 21 ♘c4 ♘xc4, which must be at least equal, with ...♖ae7 to come.

b) 11 a3 *(D)*.

B



A frequently-played move, both directed against ...b4 and preparing b4

in some cases. Nevertheless, it still allows ...♘bd7 and a quick consolidation on Black's part. See these typical and instructive examples:

b1) 11...♖a7!? 12 ♖e1 ♖e7 may transpose, via 13 ♗f4 ♖fe8 14 ♕d2, to note 'b2' to Black's 12th move.

b2) 11...♖e8 12 ♖e1 ♘bd7 13 ♗f4 ♕b6 (13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♘c5 15 ♕d2 ♗b7 16 ♖ad1 ♕b6 17 ♗h6 ± Browne-de Firmian, USA Ch (Key West) 1994; this seems to me the normal result of playing an early ...c4) 14 ♕d2. Now we have arrived at a representative position:

b21) The sort of thing I would like to avoid is Yermolinsky-Wedberg, New York 2000, which went 14...c4(?!) 15 ♗c2 ♗b7 16 ♗e3 ♕c7 (16...♕d8 17 ♗d4 ♖c8 18 ♘h2 h5!? ±) 17 ♗d4 (or 17 ♘h2!? ♘c5?! 18 ♗d4 ♖ab8 19 ♘g4! with advantage, Dreev-Emms, Hastings 2000) 17...♖ac8 18 ♘h2 ♘c5 (Emms mentions 18...♗a8, followed by ...♕b8 and ...a5, but I think something has already gone awry) 19 ♖ad1 ♗a8 20 f4 ♕b8 21 ♘g4! ♘xg4 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 hxg4 ♘d7 24 ♕d4+ ♔g8 25 g5 ♖e7 26 ♖d2 ♖ce8 27 ♘d1 (contemplating ♘e3-g4) 27...♕b6 28 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 29 ♘c3 ♘d7 30 e5! ♘c5 (30...dxe5 31 d6 ♖e6 32 f5!) 31 ♘e4 ♘xe4 32 ♗xe4 dxe5 33 d6 ♖d7 34 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 35 fxe5 with a winning position.

b22) Emms mentions the logical and restrained 14...♗b7 15 ♖ac1 ♖ac8. Then 16 b4 transposes to the main line.

b3) 11...♘bd7 (most accurate, I think) 12 ♗f4 and now:

b31) 12...♘e8 13 ♕d2 ♗b7 14 ♖fe1 f6!? has been played, but isn't much fun.

b32) Another idea without ...c4 is 12...♕e7!? 13 ♖e1 ♘h5 14 ♗g5 (14 ♗h2 ♘e5) 14...♗f6 15 ♗e3 ♖b8 16 ♕d2 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♗f1 b4!? (18...♗d7!) 19 axb4 ♖xb4, Lazarev-Poluliakhov, USSR 1990. In general, I like this treatment, although I'm a little sceptical of 18...b4 because White can now play 20 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 21 ♖xa6 ♖fb8 22 ♖a2 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♖xe4 24 ♖ea1 with dark squares and activity.

b33) 12...♕b6 and here:

b331) 13 b3, to stop ...c4, can be met by 13...♘h5 14 ♗d2 ♘e5.

b332) 13 ♖e1 and now:

b3321) Another example of the ...c4 thrust is 13...c4?! 14 ♗c2 ♘c5, as played in Rai.Garcia-Rosito, Argentine Ch (Saenz Pena City) 1996, when 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♗xe5 ♗b7 17 ♕d4 ♖ad8 18 b4 (or 18 ♖ad1) 18...cxb3 19 ♗xb3 looks good for White.

b3322) 13...♗b7 can be met by a plan to enforce b4, though after 14 ♕d2 ♖ac8 15 ♗e3 ♕d8! 16 ♖ac1 ♖e8 17 b4 cxb4 18 axb4 ♘b6! =, White's c4 is as vulnerable as any weaknesses Black himself has.

b3323) A simple reply is 13...♘h5!? 14 ♗h2 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗xe5 dxe5 intending ...♘f4 and ...f5 at some point.

b333) 13 ♕d2 ♗b7 14 ♖fe1 ♖ac8; e.g., 15 e5?! dxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖fd8 with a fine game. Note that ...♖e8 was never played, saving a tempo in this particular case.

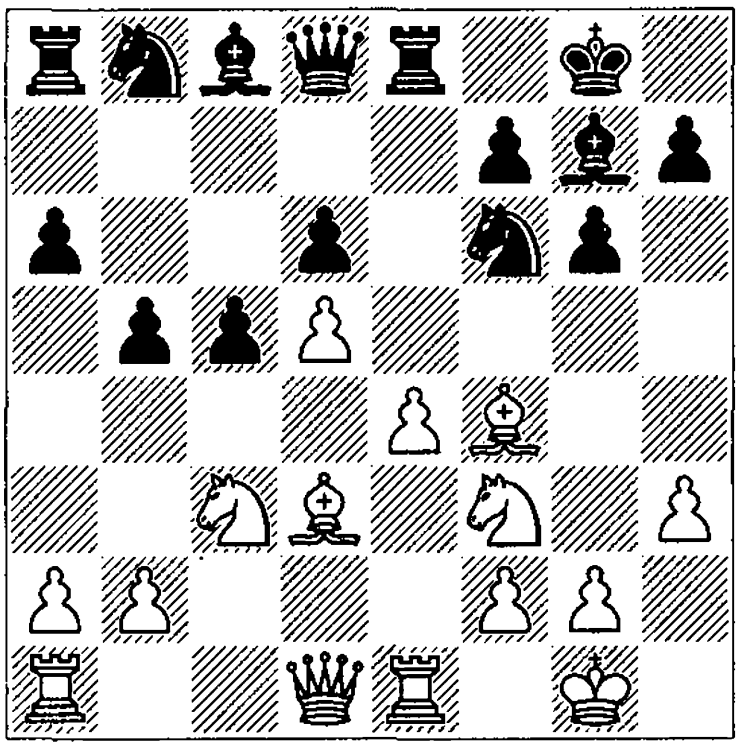
11...♖e8

Without the possibility of ...♘bd7, Black plays for restraint. 11...♕b6 appears awfully early, but maybe 11...♗b7 12 ♖e1 ♕b6 is playable, trying to get back to note 'b3322' to White's 11th move. This transposition would occur after 13 a3 ♘bd7, and I'm not convinced that, say, 13 ♕d2 is any better; then 13...♖e8 transposes to the note to White's 13th move.

For 11...♖a7!?, see the next note.

12 ♖e1 *(D)*

B



12...♗b7

12...♖a7!? is a slightly eccentric but appealing move played with success by Kamsky and Scherbakov. It has the idea of ...♖ae7 before developing Black's other pieces. Most sources treat 12...♖a7 briefly or not at all:

a) Kapengut quotes Stohl's 'refutation' 13 ♗xb5'!' axb5 14 ♘xb5, when the line continues 14...♖d7 15 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 e5 ±. But I think Black should play 14...♘h5 instead: 15 ♘xa7 ♘xf4 16 ♘xc8 ♕xc8, with a tough position to assess. To me, White's queenside pawns look harmless, as in the Benko Gambit. White should probably exploit the awkwardness of the knight on f4 by 17 ♕d2, but after 17...♘h5 followed by moves like ...♘d7, ...♕a6, and ...♘e5 or ...♘hf6, I don't see any advantage at all for White. Also, Black may be able to skirt the whole issue a move earlier by playing 11...♖a7.

Having said all that, we should look at some actual examples of play in this potentially important line:

b) 13 ♕d2 ♖ae7 and now:

b1) 14 ♗g5 and after 14...♘bd7?! 15 ♕f4 ♘e5?! (15...♕c7 = should definitely be played) 16 ♗e2 ♘h5, Zhu Chen-Oll, Beijing 1997, 17 ♗xe7! has to be advantageous. A simple solution is 14...b4 15 ♘d1 ♕b6 =.

b2) 14 a3 ♕b6 15 ♗g5 (15 ♖e2 ♘bd7 16 ♖ae1 ♘h5 17 ♗e3 ♗d4! 18 ♗c2 ♗xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♘e5 20 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 ½-½ Piket-Kamsky, Amsterdam 1996) 15...♘bd7 16 ♕f4 ♘h5 17 ♕d2 (Scherbakov gives the amazing line 17 ♕h4? ♖e5!! 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗e2 h6 20 ♗e7 {20 ♗e3?? ♗f6} 20...♕c7 21 ♗xh5 gxh5 22 ♗f6 ♘g6 ∓) 17...♘hf6 18 ♕f4 ♘h5 19 ♕d2 ½-½ Mitenkov-Scherbakov, Moscow 1999.

13 a3

Initiating a plan to block the queenside by b4. The main alternative, again, is 13 ♕d2 ♕b6 (13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♕b6 15 ♗h6 transposes to line 'c') and now:

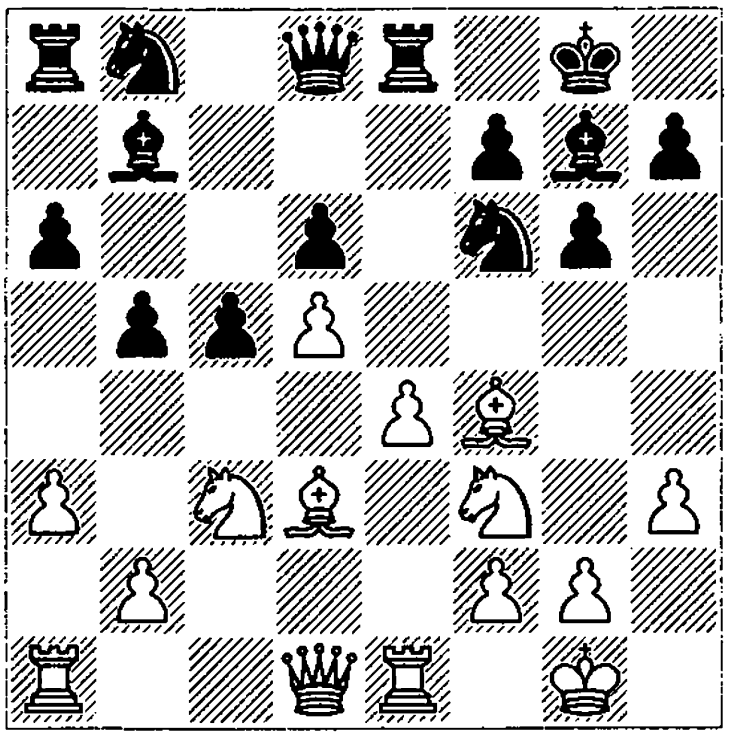
a) The trick 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 e5 ♕d8 16 exf6 ♗xf6 achieves little here: 17 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 18 ♘e4 ♘d7 19 ♖e1 ♕f8 and White had nothing in the

game Kononenko-Gordon, Rimavska Sobota 1996.

b) After 14 a3, 14...c4?! 15 ♗c2 ♘bd7 16 ♗e3 transposes to note 'b21' to White's 11th move, while 14...♘bd7 is line 'b22' of that note.

c) 14 ♗h6 c4 (as usual, I'm not happy with this move, although in this case, Black had a better chance to hold the balance; in my opinion, 14...♘bd7 is best, when Black's position is compact and resilient; again, ...c4 can always be played later) 15 ♗c2 ♗h8, and we have arrived, by a very obscure and probably non-optimal transposition (Black actually played ...c4 on move 10!), at Bates-Emms, British League (4NCL) 1999/00, which took an original course: 16 ♘e2!? ♘bd7 (16...♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♘g3 ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 ♘d7 20 ♘f5 ♗f6 21 ♘e7+ is too scary to contemplate) 17 ♘g3 ♖ac8 (Yermolinsky proposes 17...♘c5 as an improvement, continuing 18 ♗e3 ♘fd7 19 ♗d4 ♗xd4 20 ♕xd4 ♘e5 =, but White should play 18 ♖ad1! ±) 18 ♗e3 ♘c5 19 ♗d4 a5? 20 ♘f5! ♕d8 21 ♘h6+ ♔f8 22 ♘g5 and White was winning.

We now return to 13 a3 *(D)*: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13...♕b6

13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♕b6 15 ♗e3 ♕c7 has been played as well; I like to keep d4 covered for a while.

14 ♖c1 ♘bd7

The familiar thematic position, but with ...♖e8 thrown in.

15 b4

Again this idea, which normally gives Black as much play as White.

15...♖ac8 16 ♕d2

16 ♗e3 ♕d8! 17 ♕d2 cxb4 18 axb4 ♘b6! 19 ♗g5 (19 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 =) 19...♘c4 20 ♕f4 h6! with the point 21 ♗xh6? ♘h5 22 ♕g5 ♗f6 23 ♕g4 ♘b2 –+; 16 bxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♗b1 ♘h5 18 ♗d2 ♕a5 ∓.

16...♘h5!? 17 ♗h6 ♗h8 18 g4!?

Trading weaknesses for space.

18...♘hf6 19 ♗e3 h5!?

Or 19...♕d8 =, again with the idea of ...cxb4 and ...♘b6-c4.

20 g5 ♘h7 21 ♘h4

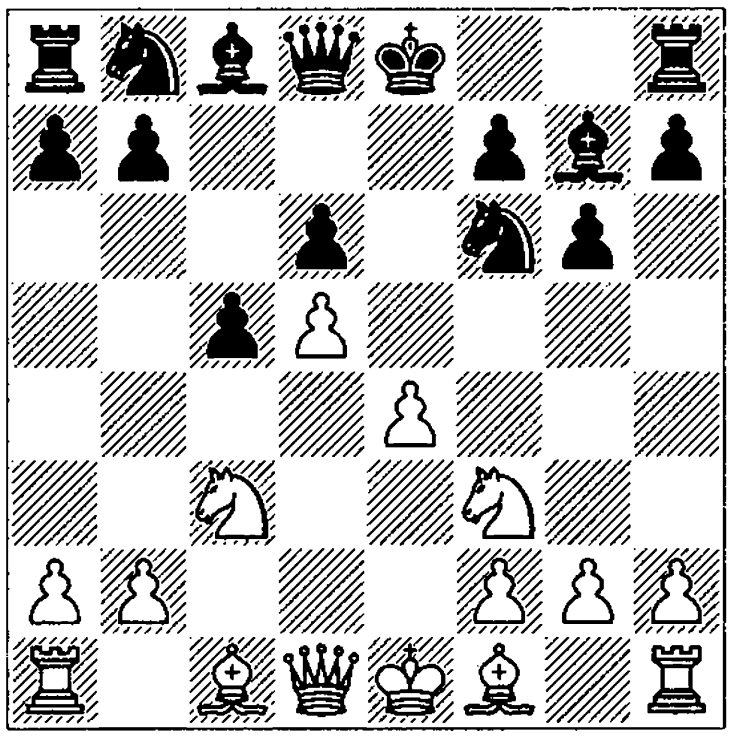
This curious move prevents ...f6. Instead, 21 a4 is met by 21...♕d8!; e.g., 22 axb5 cxb4 23 ♘a4 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 axb5 25 ♕xb4 bxa4 26 ♕xb7 ♘c5! with the point 27 ♗xc5 ♘xg5!.

After the text-move (21 ♘h4), Dautov-Lobron, Essen 1999 continued 21...♕d8 22 f4 ♘hf8 23 ♘f3 ♘b6 (with White's extra space, 23...cxb4 24 axb4 ♘b6 25 ♗d4 ♘c4 26 ♕f2! is not as convincing) 24 bxc5 dxc5 25 ♕f2 ♘fd7 26 ♖f1? (White's apparently strong central pawns are restrained by nearly every black piece) 26...♕e7 27 ♘d1 (27...♘xd5 was threatened) 27...c4 28 ♗c2 ♕xa3 29

f5 ♗g7 30 ♘d4 ♘e5 31 fxg6 fxg6 32 ♘e6 ♘bd7, when Black was winning. Note that in this case, the e5-square for Black was just as good as e6 for White.

B2)

7...♗g7 *(D)*



Here Black simply allows White to achieve his desired set-up with ♘f3, ♗d3 and h3. Because of the tremendous importance of this white system, which as we have seen can also be arrived at by other move-orders, I will look at this 'second' repertoire option in the same kind of detail as the first.

8 h3

This is probably the most accurate move. Otherwise:

a) 8 ♘d2 is mentioned in the note to White's 8th move in Line A of Chapter 10.

b) 8 ♗d3, aiming for the same position as the main line, allows 8...♗g4 9 ♕a4+ (9 0-0 0-0 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 a6 12 a4 transposes to Line B111; one can also play without ...a6 and a4, which has some advantages) 9...♘bd7 10 ♘d2 (10 e5 ♕e7) 10...0-0 11 0-0 (11 h3 ♘b6) 11...♘e5 12 ♗b1, Smyslov-Tatai, Las Palmas, and now 12...♗d7 13 ♕b3 b5! – Nunn. Black could also play 8...0-0, still intending ...♗g4. Then White's only serious independent option is 9 ♘d2, when an interesting transposition arises from 9...♘bd7 (9...♘a6 with the idea ...♘c7 is fine) 10 ♘c4 ♘b6 11 ♘e3 and we are back in the Knight's Tour of Chapter 4 (Line A)!

Here are some less important independent continuations:

c) 8 ♕a4+ and now:

c1) 8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7 transposes to Line B1 of Chapter 2.

c2) 8...♘bd7 9 ♗e2 (9 ♗f4 0-0! has the idea that 10 ♗xd6?? fails to 10...♘b6) 9...0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8!? (10...a6) 11 ♗f4 ♘b6 12 ♕c2 ♘h5 (or 12...♗g4 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 a6 having in mind ...♘c4-e5 or ...♕c7 and ...♘bd7-e5) 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗e3 f5 15 ♗g5 (15 ♗b5 ♖f8) 15...♘f6 =.

d) 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 (8...♘fd7, intending ...a6, is also satisfactory, as is 8...♘bd7) and now:

d1) 9 ♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 10 ♗f4 (10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗f4 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♘e5 =) 10...♕e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘d2 a6 13 a4 ♘e5 =.

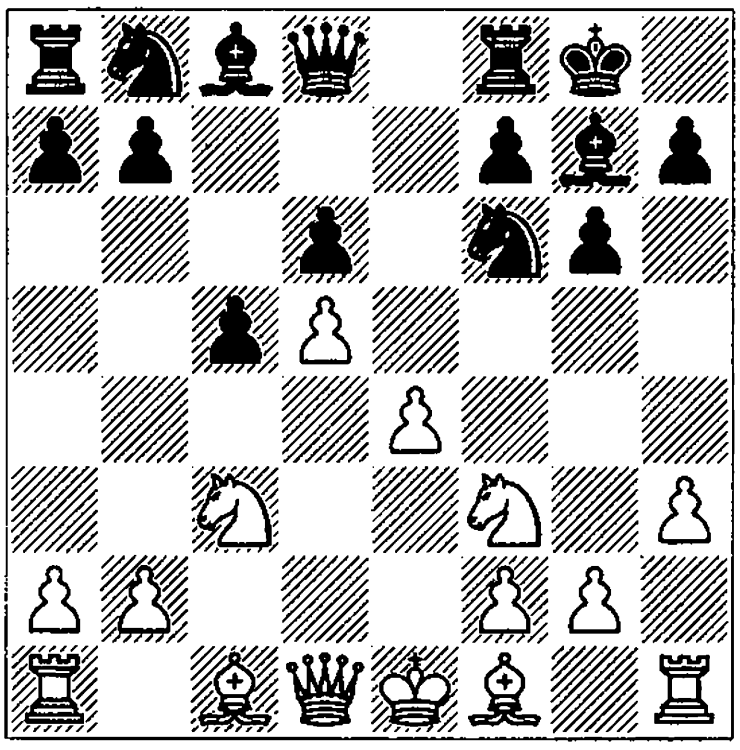
d2) 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 ♘d2 (10 0-0 b5!) 10...♖e8 11 0-0 b5! 12 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 =, in view of 14 ♘xd6 ♗a4 15 ♘xe4 ♗xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♘d7, when Black has better pieces.

d3) 9 a4 (innocuous) 9...0-0 10 0-0 ♗g4 = 11 ♖e1 ♘bd7 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 and although 13...a6 14 ♗f1 was fine in A.Fernandes-Vitor, Barreiro

2000, 13...♘e5! forces the queen to a bad square; e.g., 14 ♕d1 (14 ♕e2 a6) 14...c4!.

d4) 9 ♕b3 0-0 10 0-0 (10 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 is equal) 10...♖e8 11 ♖e1 a6!? (11...♗xb5 12 ♕xb5 ♕c7 =) 12 ♗xd7 ♘bxd7 and now, rather than 13 a4 ♕c7 = Tregubov-A.Ivanov, Russian Cht (St Petersburg) 1999, maybe 13 ♕xb7 is better.

8...0-0 *(D)*



9 ♗d3

Other moves are rare:

a) 9 ♗f4? ♖e8 (or 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8) 10 ♗d3 (10 ♘d2 a6 11 a4 ♘xe4! 12 ♘cxe4 f5) 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 f5 12 ♘fg5 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♗f5 14 f3 c4! 15 ♗c2 ♕a5+!? (15...♗xe4! 16 fxe4 ♗xb2 17 ♖b1 ♗c3+ ∓) 16 ♔f1 ♗xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗xb2 18 ♖b1. Now, rather than 18...c3, as played in Henderson-Kinsman, British League (4NCL) 1999/00, 18...♗e5 might be a bit better; e.g., 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖xb7 ♘a6! 21 ♕b1 ♖ae8 22 ♖xa7 ♕d2!.

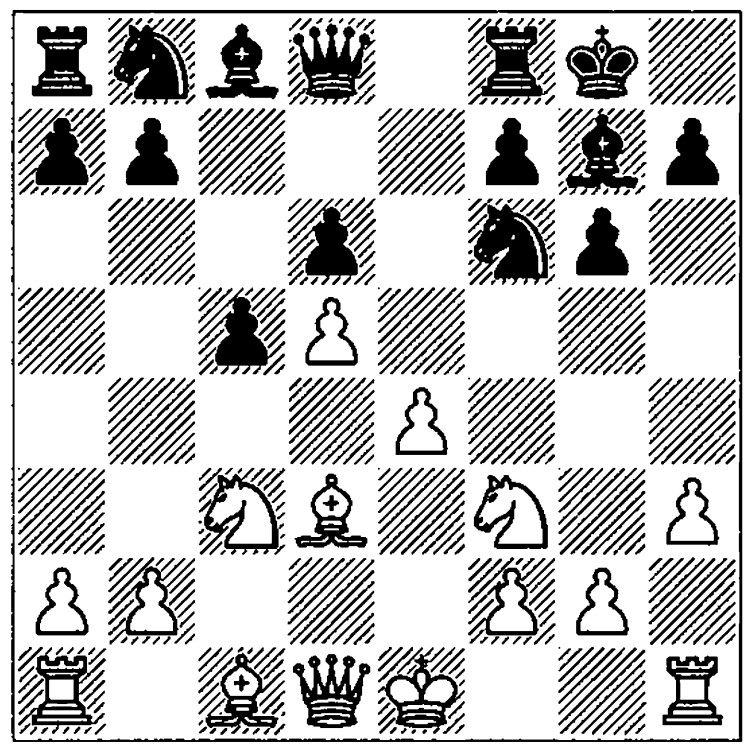
b) 9 ♗e3 is inflexible but surprisingly popular, so it deserves some attention. Here 9...b5!? is sometimes played, although Black has a number of other instructive responses:

b1) 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 a6 (or 10...♗d7 11 a4 ♘a6 12 ♗e2 ♘b4 13 0-0 b6 14 ♗f3 ♗c8 15 ♘c4 ♗a6 16 b3 ♘d7 17 ♖c1 ♘e5 ∓ Piket-Topalov, Monte Carlo Amber rpd 1998) 11 a4 ♘xe4! 12 ♘cxe4 f5 13 ♘xd6 (13 ♘xc5 f4) 13...♕xd6 14 ♘c4 ♕f6 15 ♗e2 f4! 16 ♗xc5 ♘d7 17 ♗b4 f3! with a terrific attack, Barria-Minzer, Torre Blanca 1998.

b2) 9...♕e7 10 ♘d2 (10 ♕c2 ♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 f5 Stohl; 10 e5 ♘e8 Psakhis) 10...♘xe4! 11 ♘dxe4 f5 12 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♗e2, Dautov-Psakhis, Dresden Z 1998, and now, among other good solutions, simply 13...a6 14 a4 ♘d7 15 0-0 b6 (or 15...f4) is fine.

b3) 9...♘bd7 should also suffice: 10 ♘d2 a6 11 a4 (11 ♘c4 ♘e8 12 a4 ♘e5 =) 11...♖b8 12 ♗d3 (12 ♗e2 ♘e8 13 0-0 ♘c7 14 ♘c4 ♕e7 15 ♗f4 ♘e5 =) 12...♘e5 13 ♗c2 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 0-0 ♖e8 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 =.

We now return to 9 ♗d3 *(D)*:



9...♘h5!?

A somewhat unusual but intriguing move. I should mention that the alternative 9...b5 can lead by force, after 10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘fd2, to an ending which has been worked out to past the 20th move and gives absolutely no winning chances for Black (sometimes White finds minor improvements which seem to increase his own winning chances, and Black in response finds ways to draw). Such a move might be acceptable at the highest levels (in order to draw with Black), but it would hardly be appropriate as a repertoire choice. Black also has to cope with the enormously complicated 10 ♘xb5, which at the moment seems OK for him, but theory is unsettled.

For the record, I also worked for many days on the move 9...♗d7, which theory gives as equal or unclear. Unfortunately, that same theory is easy to improve upon, and I came out convinced that 9...♗d7 gives White a considerable advantage with correct play. Thus the system before you, which I think is underrated.

Regarding 9...♘h5 and 10...♘bd7 (or 9...♘bd7 and 10...♘h5 – see the next note), I believe that it is particularly important to play these moves (in either order) without the preliminary ...a6 and a4, and also without a preliminary ...♖e8. The interpolation of ...a6 and a4 can be unfavourable for Black in several lines, and it can always be played later if necessary.

Black can normally get to the desired position by playing 9...♘bd7 first, intending 10 0-0 ♘h5, and this may even be preferable (see the note to White's 10th move). A rare alternative after 9...♘bd7 is 10 ♗f4!? (after 10 ♘b5 ♘xe4!? {or 10...c4 followed by ...♘c5} 11 ♗xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘c3 ♖e8 one prefers Black) 10...♖e8 (10...♕e7 also has its points: 11 0-0 {11 ♘b5 ♘e8} 11...♘h5, and now 12 ♗h2 ♘e5, 12 ♗e3 a6 13 a4 ♖e8 14 ♕d2 ♘e5, or 12 ♗g5! ♗f6! 13 ♗h6 ♖e8, all with perfectly playable positions) 11 0-0 (11 ♗xd6 ♕b6 12 ♗h2 ♕xb2 13 ♖c1 c4 14 ♗b1 ♘g4! ∓) 11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♘c5 13 ♘d2 (13 e5 dxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗f5! 15 ♗xf5 gxf5 intending ...♘d3) 13...b6!? 14 ♘xc4 ♘cxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♖e1 (16 ♗a4 ♗d7 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 f3 b5 =) 16...♗a6 with a level game.

10 0-0

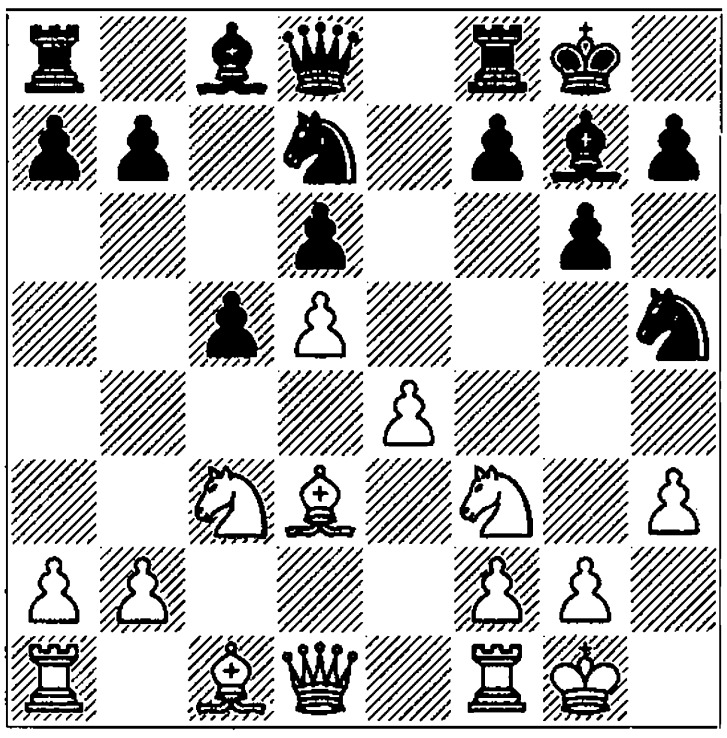
White can also try to make progress by saving the tempo needed for castling. This probably yields no advantage, but the reader should note that using the move-order 9...♘bd7 10 0-0 ♘h5 would avoid the following lines:

a) 10 g4 weakens the kingside in return for dubious benefits. Normally ...h5 follows at some point, as we will also see in later lines; e.g., 10...♘f6 11 ♗f4 h5 (11...♕e7 =) 12 gxh5 (12 ♘d2 hxg4 13 ♘c4 gxh3 14 ♘xd6 ♗g4 with the idea 15 f3 ♘h5; 12 g5 ♘e8 practically forces White's king to the vulnerable queenside, and usually makes a later ..f6 or ...f5 effective) 12...♘xh5 13 ♗g5 ♗f6 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 ♕d2 ♖e8 =.

b) 10 ♗g5 is the only serious alternative: 10...♗f6 11 ♗e3 (11 ♗h6

♗g7!? {11...♖e8 is also fully playable} 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 0-0 ♕f6! = with the ideas of ...♘bd7 and ...♘f4) 11...♘d7 12 ♗e2 (12 g4?! ♘g7 13 g5 ♗e7 14 h4, Antwerpen-Hasselt, corr. 1991, and now 14...f5 {Schneider} or just 14...f6!) 12...♖e8 13 ♘d2 ♘g7 14 0-0 (14 ♘c4 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♘f6 16 f3 ♘fh5 = with ideas like ...♘g3, ...b5 and ...f5) 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 f5!. I think that Black is OK here, but if you don't like it, consider 9...♘bd7 first.

10...♘d7 *(D)*



W

Our key position. It's worth mentioning that much of the theory of this type of position derives from the lines in which ...a6 and a4 are interpolated. In the appropriate places, I will recommend transposition to those lines.

What is Black up to? For one thing, the move ...♘h5 prevents ♗f4, and that is no small matter, since ♗f4 is played in almost every Modern Main subsystem. Secondly, the move ...♘e5 becomes available, either before or after moves like ...♖e8. If one looks at the theory of other defences to the Modern Main Line, one sees that Black has a lot of difficulty clearing the first rank, in part because the d7-knight gets in the way. In this case, ...♘e5 both hits d3 and frees the c8-bishop. After ♘xe5 and ...♗xe5, Black begins to look towards the kingside, with ...♕h4 being particularly appropriate since h3 has been played. White can respond to ...♘e5 with ♗e2, but we will see that this opens up other tactical possibilities. Finally, the move g4 is usually quite weakening when combined with White's rather slow set-up with h3, ♗d3, etc. As a rule, White should delay this tactical thrust until he has developed more pieces.

Due to these considerations, White tends to move his queen's bishop at this point, both to develop and to disturb Black's plans. Alternatively, he can prepare the retreat ♗f1 by playing ♖e1.

B21: 11 ♗g5 179
B22: 11 ♗e3 182
B23: 11 ♖e1 183

Or:

a) 11 ♘b5 ♘e5 =; e.g., 12 g4 ♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 a6!.

b) 11 g4 is playable but somewhat weakening: 11...♘hf6 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 13 ♖e1! (13 ♘b5 ♘e8) 13...h5!? (or 13...♘e8! =) 14 e5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 dxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♕d6 (16...♕d8 17 ♕f3 hxg4 18 hxg4 ♘d7) 17 ♘b5!? ♕d8 =.

B21)

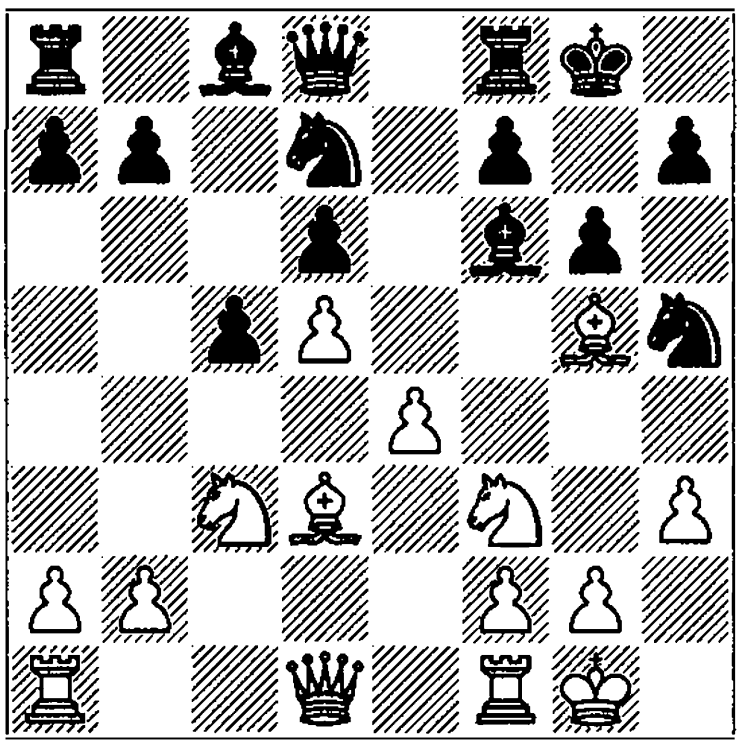
11 ♗g5

Probably the most aggressive move, and the traditional response to ...♘h5.

White tries to disrupt Black's development by forcing weaknesses or awkward piece placement.

11...♗f6 *(D)*

11...♕b6!? also merits consideration; e.g., 12 ♕d2 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♗e3, De Boer-Faase, Netherlands 1994, and here 14...♗d7 15 f4 ♗d4!? 16 ♗xd4 cxd4 17 ♘e2 ♖ae8 intends ...f5, and 18 f5 gxf5 19 exf5 ♖e3 20 f6 ♔h8 is unclear.



12 ♗h6

Or:

a) 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 = with the ideas ...♘f4, ...a6 and ...♘e5; e.g., 13 g3 ♖e8 14 ♖e1 (14 ♘b5 ♘b6!) 14...a6 15 a4 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 with an equal, double-edged game.

b) 12 ♗e3 is also important:

b1) 12...♘e5!? and here:

b11) 13 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘g7! 15 ♕d2 ♗e5 16 ♗f4, Sokolin-Sandić, Pula 1989, and now Kapengut suggests simply 16...♖e8 with the idea ...f5; this is equal. 16...♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 g5!? 18 ♕d2 f5, with equality, is also of note.

b12) 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 f4 ♗g7 15 ♕f3! is more dangerous; compare the less threatening positions with the queen on d2.

b2) 12...♖e8 and now:

b21) 13 g4 ♘g7 14 g5 ♗e7 (or 14...♗e5!?) 15 h4 f6 16 ♔g2 ♖f8 17 ♖h1 ♘e5! (17...♘h5; 17...fxg5 18 hxg5 ♘h5 =; e.g., 19 ♕d2 ♘e5 20 ♗e2 ♘g4) 18 ♘xe5 fxe5 19 ♖b1 ♘h5 with ...♘f4+ next.

b22) 13 ♖b1 a6 (or 13...♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♘g7) 14 a4 ♘e5 (14...b6 15 ♕d2 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 b4 ♖a7!? {17...♗d7} 18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♘e2 ♗g7 =) 15 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 16 ♗xf3 ♘g7 17 ♗f4 ♗e5 18 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 19 b4 b6 20 bxc5 bxc5 (or 20...dxc5 intending ...♘e8-d6) 21 ♗e2 f5 =.

b23) 13 ♕d2 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 (14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 is equal, since this time 15 f4? fails to 15...♗xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♘g3, and the insertion of ♕d2 and ...♖e8 helps Black in any case) 14...♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♘g7 and Black intends ...♗e5 and ...f5; for example, 16 ♖fe1 (16 ♕c2 ♗g5) 16...♗e5 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗h6 a6 19 a4 b6 intending ...♖a7-f7 and/or ...f5.

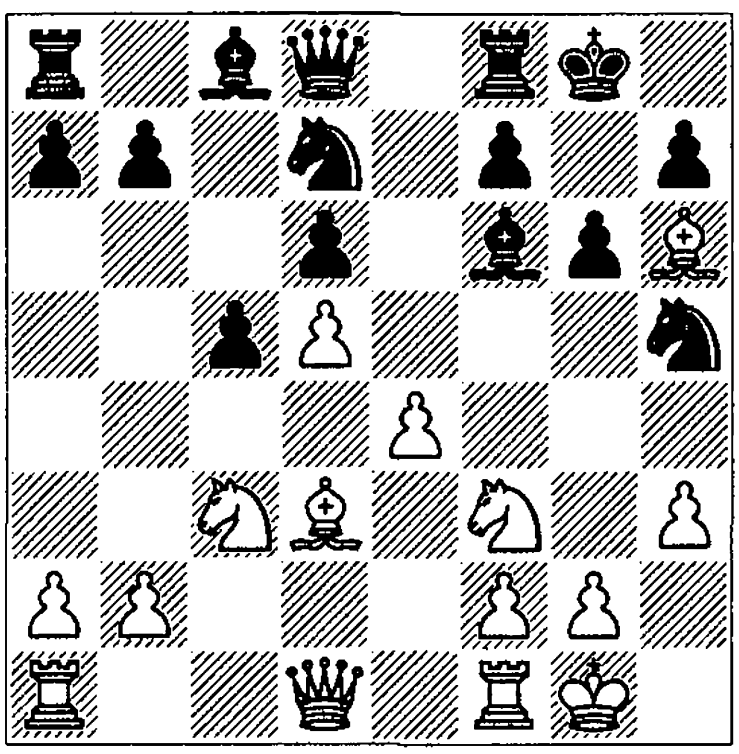
b24) 13 ♘d2 a6 14 a4 ♗d4 transposes into Krasenkow-Oliwa, Polish Ch (Brzeg Dolny) 1996: 15 ♗xd4 cxd4 16 ♘e2 ♘c5 17 ♖a3 ♗d7 18 ♗c2 d3 19 ♗xd3 ♗xa4 20 ♖xa4 ♘xd3 21 ♖d4, and now Black should have played 21...♘hf4!; e.g., 22 ♘xf4 (22 ♘c3 ♘xb2 ∓ 23 ♕b3? ♕g5 24 g3 ♖ac8!) 22...♘xf4 23 ♕f3 ♕g5 24 ♘c4 ♖ad8 25 g3?! ♕f6.

A theme to note in these lines is how the apparently poor position of

the knight on g7 is compensated by its ability to enforce ...f5 or ...h5. This theme arises in several Benoni systems.

We now return to 12 ♗h6 *(D)*:

B



12...♖e8!?

The ambitious move, but it should be said that 12...♗g7 is also a reasonable continuation: 13 ♗xg7 (13 ♕d2 ♗xh6!? {13...♖e8} 14 ♕xh6 ♕f6 {'=' Kapengut, but 14...f6! should be considered as well, restricting White's bad bishop} 15 ♗b5! ♕g7 16 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 17 ♘d2 ♖d8 18 f4 a6 19 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 20 g4 ♘f6 21 ♖ac1 ± Heigl-Beyer, corr. 1995) 13...♔xg7 (Kapengut suggests 13...♘xg7 14 ♕d2 ♕f6, but this seems a worse version of the given line, since 15 ♕h6 is available, among other ideas) 14 ♕d2 ♕f6! with the idea of controlling f4; if 15 ♘e2, then 15...♖e8 is sensible, with ideas like ...b5 and ...♘e5.

13 ♕d2

13 g4 ♗g7!? (13...♘g7 is the alternative, and might contain some new ideas; a possible continuation would be 14 ♗f4 h5 15 g5 {15 ♗xd6 hxg4 16 hxg4 ♕b6 =} 15...♗e5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♔g2 f6 =) 14 ♗g5 ♘hf6!? (14...♗f6! =) 15 ♖e1 a6 16 ♕d2 (16 a4 b6) 16...b5 17 ♕f4 ♕e7 18 a3! ± h5 19 ♕g3 hxg4 20 hxg4 and here, instead of 20...♕f8 as in Atalik-C.Hansen, Thessaloniki OL 1988, Black might try 20...♖b8!? 21 ♖adl b4 22 axb4 ♖xb4 23 ♖d2! (23 ♗f4 ♘e5) 23...c4 =, although one feels that either 13...♘g7 or 14...♗f6 is a better way to equality.

13...a6 14 g4

White reasons that he has enough forces out to justify this move. Otherwise, 14 a4 ♘e5 (14...b6!?) 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 gives Black a reliable position.

14...♘g7

OK, what's the knight doing on this awful square? But equally, what's White's pawn doing on g4? As discussed earlier, Black can reorganize his pieces by bringing a knight to c5 or e5, and it will be hard for White to restrain both ...f5 or ...h5. See also several examples of a knight on g7 in note 'b' to White's 12th move.

15 a4 ♕c7!?

15...b6 is a slower but solid move, intending ...♘e5, with ...♖a7 when appropriate to defend the kingside, e.g., after ...f5.

16 ♔g2 c4 17 ♗c2 ♖b8 18 ♘d4 ♘c5 19 g5 ♕d7! 20 ♖h1 ♗d8

Now the bishop will be active on a5, and White's pieces are hardly well positioned for attack.

21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 f4 ♗a5 23 ♖ae1 ♔g8

Now, instead of 24 ♕d1? ♕d8! 25 h4 ♕b6 ∓ Zaichik-Romanishin, Tbilisi

1988, Zaichik recommends 24 f5 with the idea h4-h5. Unfortunately, Schneider points out that this allows simply 24...♘xa4! threatening ...♘xb2; for example, 25 ♖a1 ♗xc3 26 bxc3 ♘c5 27 ♕f4 ♕e7 with advantage.

B22)

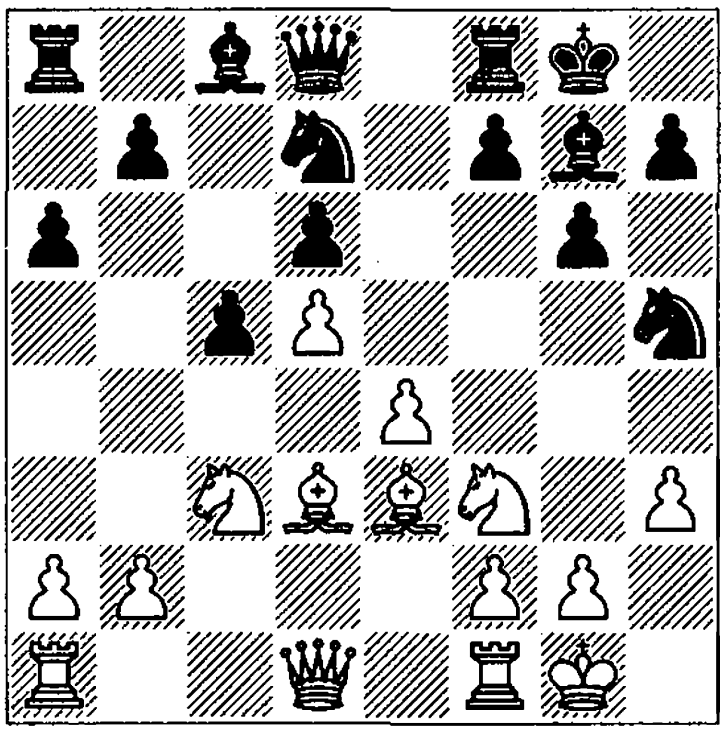
11 ♗e3

Instead of harassing Black, White counts upon direct development. This bears comparison with 11 ♗g5 ♗f6 12 ♗e3 (note 'b' to White's 12th move in Line B21); the interpolation of ...♗f6 does not clearly help either side.

11...a6 *(D)*

11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 f4 ♗g7 14 ♕f3 b6 15 ♖ae1 (15 g4 ♘f6 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘d7 18 d6 ♖b8 ∓) 15...♗b7 is maybe a bit better for White, but that's hard to prove.

W



12 a4

This is a position with some theory behind it, since ...a6 and a4 have been interpolated. Black seems to have more than one way to achieve a dynamic balance.

The alternative 12 g4!? is weakening, as usual, but it also gains time to contest e5. Some hopefully representative analysis follows, so as to familiarize ourselves with the themes: 12...♘hf6 13 ♗f4 ♕e7 14 ♖e1 ♘e5 (we have encountered the idea 14...h5!? 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♕d6!? before) 15 ♘xe5 dxe5 16 ♗e3 b6 17 ♕f3 h5! 18 g5 (18 gxh5 ♘xh5 19 ♖ad1 ♕h4 20 ♔h2 ♖a7 =) 18...♘h7 19 ♕g3 f6! (the standard break we so often see in lines with g5) 20 gxf6 ♖xf6, and White's position is under some pressure; e.g., 21 ♖ad1 ♔h8 22 f4? (22 a3 g5! 23 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 24 ♕xg5 ♗xh3 with a very promising attack after ...♗g4 and ...♗h6) 22...exf4 23 ♗xf4 ♖xf4! 24 ♕xf4 ♗e5 25 ♕f1 (25 ♕h6 ♕h4 −+) 25...♘g5 ∓.

12...b6!?

This is an attempt to keep more play in the position, reinforcing c5 against e5 ideas and in some cases preparing a second-rank transfer by ...♖a7-e7. Black can also choose:

a) 12...♖b8!? 13 ♕d2 (13 ♕c2!?, to answer 13...♕a5 with 14 ♘d2, is met by 13...♖e8 intending ...♘e5, when the queen isn't particularly well-placed on c2) 13...♖e8 14 ♖ab1 ♕a5 yielded mutual chances in G.Georgadze-B.Stein, Gausdal 1992.

b) 12...♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♘e5!? (13...b6 is solid) can lead to complex and forcing play: 14 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♘f6 16 ♗f4 ♘d7! 17 ♗xd6! ♕b6 18 e5 ♘xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5! 20 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♕e2 f6 22 a5 ♕c7 23 ♕c4! (otherwise Black's bishops get out) 23...♔g7 24 ♘e4 ♗f5! 25 d6 (25 ♘xc5 ♖c8 26

♘e6+ ♗xe6 27 ♕xc7+ ♖xc7 28 dxe6 ♔f8 and 25 ♕xc5 ♗xe4 26 ♕xc7+ ♗xc7 27 ♗xe4 ♗d6 should be drawn easily) 25...♗xd6 26 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 27 ♗xb7 ♖a7 28 ♗f3 ♗d3 29 ♖d1 ♖d7 = P.Cramling-Yudasin, Dos Hermanas 1992.

13 ♕d2 ♘e5! 14 ♗e2

14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 is less critical: 15 f4 (15 ♖fe1 ♖e8 16 ♖ab1 ♕h4!? 17 ♗g5 ♗f4 18 ♗xh4 ♗xd2 19 ♖ed1 ♗h6 20 ♗e2 ♘f4 21 ♗f1 ♗g7 =) 15...♗g7 (considering ideas like ...♕h4) 16 g4!? ♘f6 (with the threat ...h5) 17 ♕g2 (Quinn) 17...♖a7 (17...♖e8 18 ♖ae1 h6!?) 18 g5 ♘h5 19 ♗e2 (19 ♖ae1 f5) 19...f5! 20 ♗xh5 gxh5 and the a7-rook ensures satisfactory counterplay for Black.

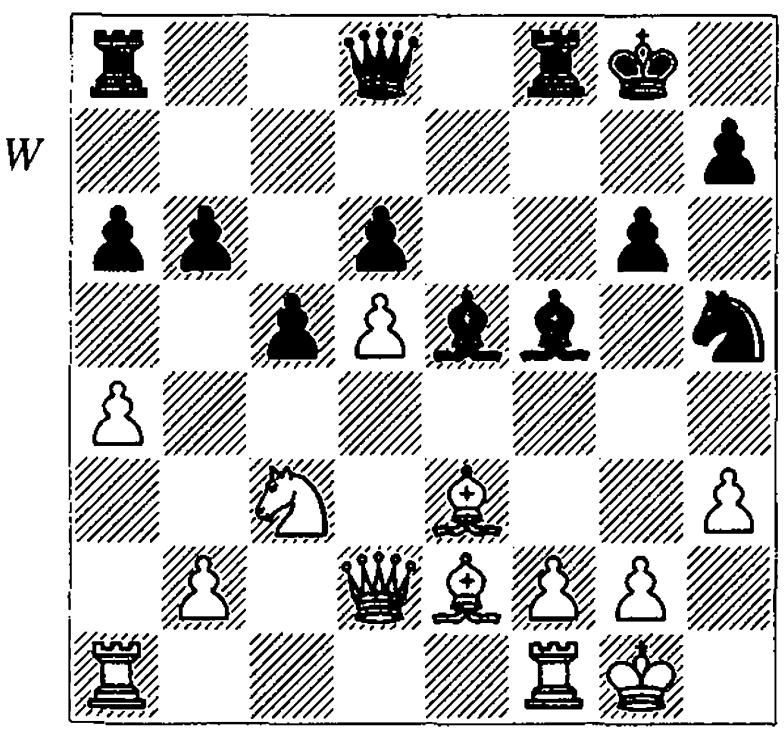
14...f5!? 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 exf5!

Or:

a) 16 f4?! ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♘g3!.

b) 16 ♗xh5 f4!? 17 ♗f3 ♕g5 18 ♔h1 ♕h4 should be at least equal, since 19 ♗xc5 bxc5 gives Black a ready-made attack by ...g5 and ...h5 or ...♖g7 and ...g4.

16...♗xf5 *(D)*



17 g4?

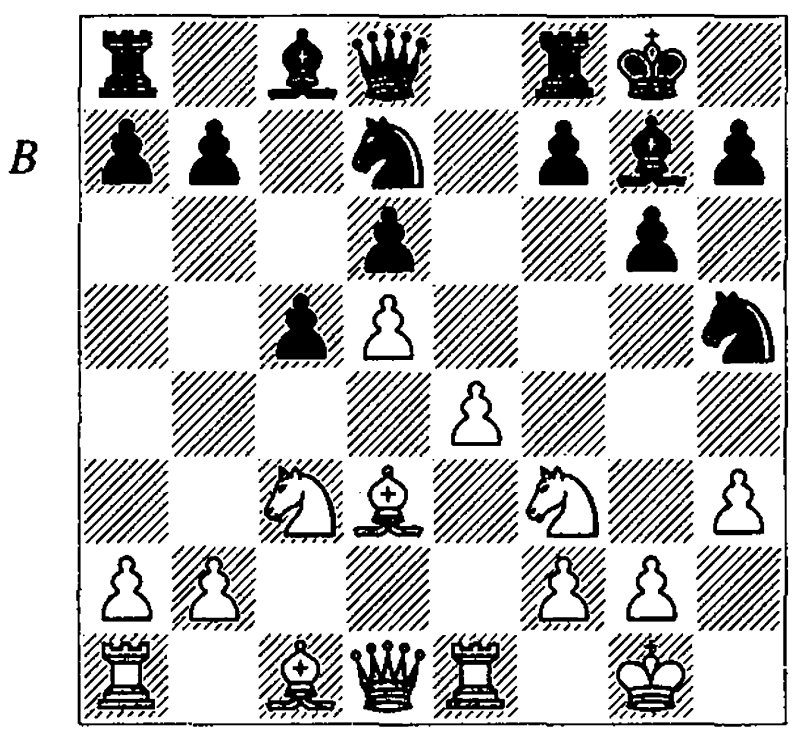
This just doesn't work out tactically with so many of Black's pieces aimed at the kingside. Better is 17 ♗g5 ♘f6 (17...♗f6 is perfectly reasonable) 18 g4 (18 ♖fe1 ♕c8!? 19 ♗f1 {19 ♗c4 ♗xh3!} 19...♖a7 20 g4 ♗xg4 21 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 22 ♗g2 ♕h5 with an obscure but dangerous attack) 18...♗d7!? (or 18...♗c8 19 ♗c4 ♖a7 20 ♖ae1 ♖e7 =) 19 ♗c4 ♕c8 (threatening ...♗xg4) 20 f3 b5! 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 23 ♗xb5 ♖b8 24 ♖a5!? c4 with good compensation.

17...♕h4 18 ♔g2 ♗f4!

A very nice touch. White is in major trouble now; for example, 19 ♖h1 (19 gxf5 ♗xe3 20 ♕xe3 {20 fxe3 ♕g3+ 21 ♔h1 ♕xh3+ 22 ♔g1 ♘g3 with an attack} 20...♖ae8 −+; 19 ♔g1 ♕xh3 20 ♗xf4 ♗e4 −+) 19...♗xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♖ae8 21 ♕d2 ♖xe2! and Black wins. The play following 14...f5 was expanded from analysis by Mark Quinn.

B23)

11 ♖e1 *(D)*



11...♘e5!?

This move leads to fascinating complications. Other ideas:

a) The main alternative is 11...♖e8, which resembles note 'b' to Black's 12th move in Line B22, although ...♖e8 was probably better timed in that case: 12 ♗e3 (12 ♗f1 a6! {12...♘e5 13 ♘h2! ± is more favourable for White} 13 a4 ♘e5 14 ♘h2 ♕h4! is unclear) 12...♘e5 13 ♘xe5! (13 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘f6, with the idea that 15 ♗f4 is met by 15...♘d7! 16 ♗xd6 ♕b6) 13...♗xe5 14 ♕d2 ±.

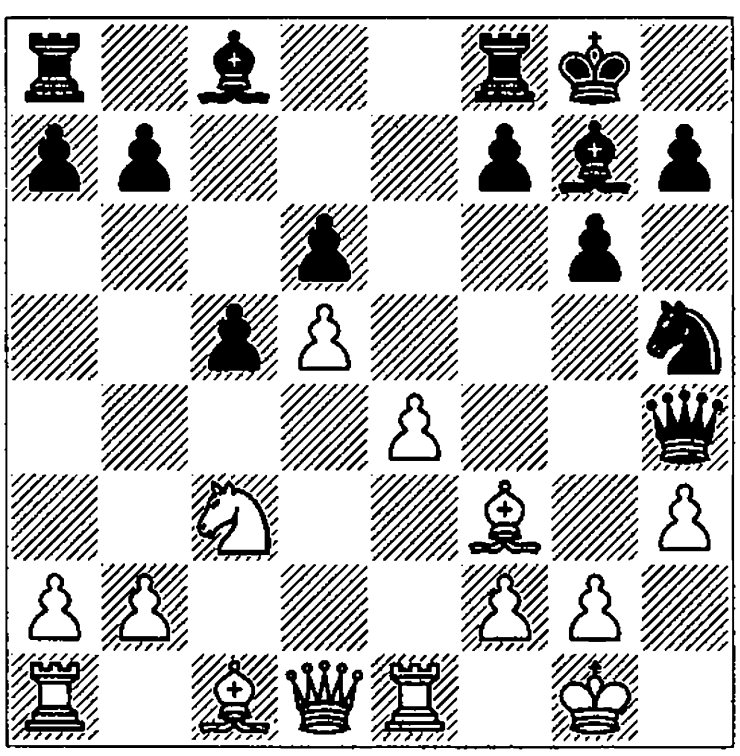
b) For the record, it is instructive to compare a line like 11...a6 12 a4 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♕h4 15 ♗xh5 gxh5 16 ♕d2 f5 17 ♖a3! f4 18 ♘e2 f3 19 ♘f4! with our main line below.

12 ♗e2!

12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♕d2 a6 15 a4 ♕f6 (or 15...♕h4!? 16 ♗g5 ♗f4 17 ♗xh4 ♗xd2 18 ♖ed1 ♗h6 =) 16 ♗g5 ♗f4 17 ♕xf4 (17 ♗xf6 ♗xd2 18 ♖ed1 ♗f4! 19 ♗h4 g5 ∓) 17...♕xf4 18 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 =.

12...♘xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 ♕h4! *(D)*

W



This move is dubious with ...a6 and a4 in, mainly because ♖a3! is a good move for White at one point, and also because a5 is effective in some lines – compare note 'b' to Black's 11th move. But here ...♕h4 gives good counterplay in return for Black's shattered pawns.

14 ♗xh5

14 e5?! ♗xe5 15 ♖e4 ♕f6 16 ♗xh5 gxh5 17 ♕xh5 ♗f5 almost certainly gives Black the advantage with his energetic bishop-pair.

14...gxh5

In return for the shattered pawns, Black has two active bishops, the queenside majority and attacking ideas involving the open g-file. We come to an important decision:

15 ♕d2

A very challenging alternative that was not available in the ...a6/a4 lines mentioned above is 15 ♘b5!?, although after intriguing complications, 15...♗e5 appears both sound and promising for Black; e.g., 16 ♗h6 (16 ♘c7 ♖b8 17 ♗h6? ♗xh3!; 16 ♕c2 can be met by 16...♗d7 or 16...♔h8! ∓ with ideas like ...♗xh3 and ...♖g8) 16...♗xh3! 17 ♕b3! (17 ♗xf8 can be met by 17...♗d7! 18 f4! ♗xf4 19 ♗xd6!! =, while 17...♗h2+!? may retain winning chances amidst the chaos; 17 gxh3 ♕xh3 18 f4 ♔h8! 19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 ∓ intending ...♖g8) 17...♗d7! 18 g3! (18 ♗xf8 ♕h2+ 19 ♔f1 ♖xf8 ∓; White can hardly defend) 18...♕f6 (18...c4!?) 19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 and Black has more than enough counterplay, since the exchange for a pawn doesn't mean much with ...♗xb5, ...h4 and

...♔h8 coming. White can't even bail out with 20 f4 ♗xb5! 21 fxe5 ♕xe5 22 ♕xb5, since 22...♕xg3+ 23 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 24 ♔g1 ♔h8 25 ♔f2 ♖g8 leaves Black well on top. As always, the Benoni is an exercise in sustained initiative.

15...f5! 16 ♕g5!

16 ♕f4 ♕f6 17 ♘b5 fxe4 18 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 =; I like Black's bishops.

16...♕xg5 17 ♗xg5 fxe4 18 ♗e7

18 ♘xe4 is harmless in view of 18...♗xb2: 19 ♖ad1 ♗f5 20 ♘xd6 ♗c2 = or 19 ♖ab1?! ♗d4!.

I think White's play has been optimal up to this point, but his slight advantage is meaningless in view of the coming opposite-coloured bishops; e.g., 18...♖e8 (18...♖f7 19 ♗xd6 b6 is also possible) 19 ♗xd6 (19 ♖xe4 ♗f5 20 ♖f4 ♖xe7 21 ♖xf5 ♖f8 is equal) 19...♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♖d8 21 ♗f4 (21 ♗xc5 ♖xd5 22 ♗d4 ♗f5 =) 21...♖xd5 22 ♖xe4 ♗d7 23 c4 (23 ♖ae1 ♖f8 =) 23...♖d4 24 ♖xd4 cxd4 25 ♖d1 ♖c8 26 ♖xd4 ♗e6 and the draw is obvious.

This whole variation with ...♘h5 and ...♘bd7 has been seriously underestimated, in my opinion, and offers Black better chances than lines such as 9...♖e8, 9...♘a6, 9...♗d7, 9...c4, and the corresponding lines following 9...a6 10 a4. I won't pretend that I don't have some intuitive doubts about this system achieving absolute and incontrovertible equality (although it may do so). On the other hand, whatever advantage White has is probably on the scale of his slight advantage in any other opening. For the practical Benoni player, this method of play offers the sort of double-edged fight most players want, without inordinate risk for Black.

The Modern Main Line is still a formidable weapon, but not one that should frighten you into looking for another opening!

10 Classical Main Line

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3

Move-orders leading to the Classical Main Line are very tricky and full of implications. 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 allows 7...a6, as discussed in Chapter 9, so 6 ♘f3 is the most flexible way to achieve an early ♘d2 without allowing either ...♗g4 or ...b5. Note that 6 e4 g6 7 ♗e2 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 is a move-order briefly discussed in Chapter 1 (note 'f5' to White's 7th move in Line D2).

6...g6

Here White has a choice:

A:	**7 e4**	186
B:	**7 ♘d2**	199

This division is artificial, since the main lines of both sections converge by move 10. I have arranged the material so as to emphasize move-order issues, while retaining the independence of each section, so that Line A will cover ...♘bd7 lines and Line B will examine ...♘a6 lines.

A)

7 e4

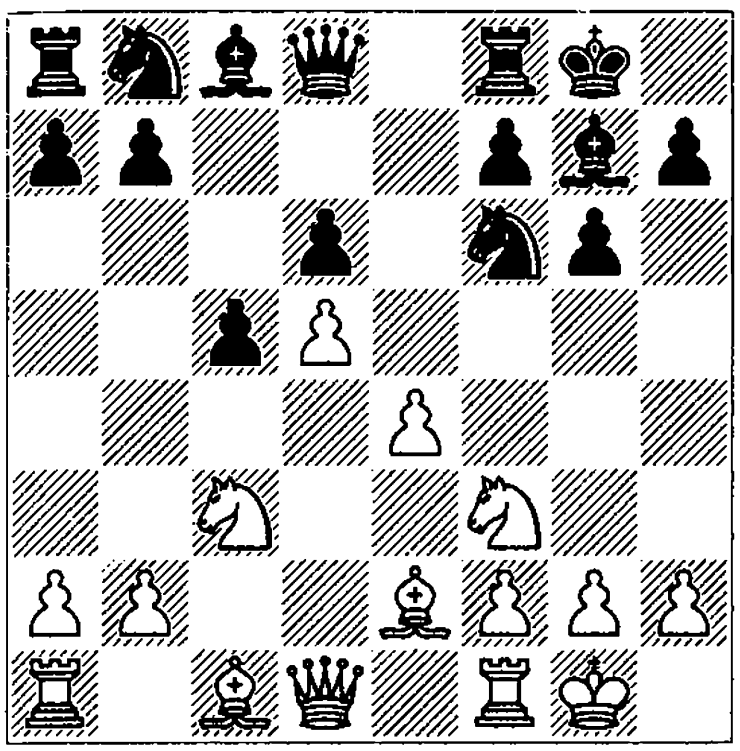
This is the traditional way to get to the Classical Main line, but as mentioned above, Black can now deviate by 7...a6. The idea is that after 8 a4, Black can play 8...♗g4 and reach a variation we dealt with in the previous chapter. That is held in high regard for Black, so much so that some consider it a good reason not to play these Classical lines with 7 e4 at all. But of course, Black may not like other sub-variations which may arise from this move-order, such as 7...a6 8 h3 b5 9 ♗d3 (again, see Chapter 9); for that reason or others, he may bypass 7...a6 and play directly into this chapter with 7...♗g7. Note, by the way, that 7 e4 a6 8 ♗e2?! is poor for White, since 8...b5 already threatens ...b4.

7...♗g7 8 ♗e2

8 ♕a4+ and 8 ♗d3 are dealt with in the note to White's 8th move in Line B2 of Chapter 9 (lines 'c' and 'b' respectively). If White still wants to prevent the possibility of ...♗g4, he can play 8 ♘d2 now, although this is slightly less flexible than 7 ♘d2. In the latter case, Black is forced to commit to his favourite defence against the Knight's Tour Variation (Chapter 4), and White can do without e4 if he so chooses. Anyway, after 8 ♘d2 0-0 9 ♗e2 we would rejoin this chapter.

8...0-0 9 0-0 *(D)*

This is the start of the Classical Main Line, in which White puts his pieces on 'natural' squares and hopes to restrict Black's possibilities before mobilizing for attack. The Classical Main Line, formerly the principal line



of the Benoni, is no longer as popular as it once was, having been superseded by the Modern Main Line (Chapter 9). In part, this is because fairly standard remedies have been found for Black, and in part because the Modern Main Line is so difficult to meet. There are nevertheless quite a few strong players who play the traditional system, and no serious Benoni player can afford to be unprepared for it.

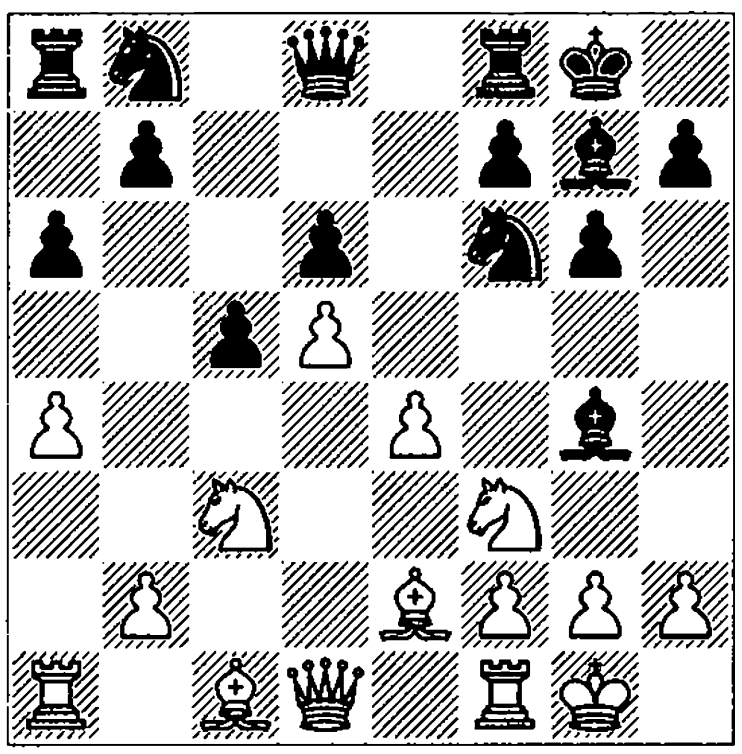
9...♖e8!?

A move that works in this position, but is needed even more versus move-orders in which White plays an early ♘d2 and then e4. A few more fine points:

a) 9...♘a6 appears to save a tempo (...♖e8) on the ...♘a6-c7 lines which are presented in Line B. But White can take advantage of the omission and forego 10 ♘d2 in favour of 10 ♗f4!. Then theory gives White the nod.

b) On the other hand, if you got this exact position (i.e., where White has decided not to play ♘d2 earlier), you would probably be happy to play our first choice 9...a6! 10 a4 ♗g4! *(D)*.

Then:



b1) 11 h3 ♗xf3 just wastes a tempo or commits White to an h3 he may not want to play; Black was going to exchange on f3 anyway.

b2) 11 ♗f4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 brings us to a key line from the suggested system of Chapter 9 (Line B112). This was the move-order that originally drove White away from the Classical. Today, most players try to avoid it by 8 ♘d2 or 9 ♘d2.

b3) White can still deviate by playing 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2, which unfortunately is very complicated: 12...♘bd7 13 ♘c4 (13 f4 ♖e8; 13 a5 ♕e7 14 ♖e1 ♖ae8) 13...♘b6 14 ♘e3 (14 ♘a3 ♖e8 15 ♕c2 ♘h5!? 16 a5 ♘d7 17 ♘c4 ♘e5 18 ♘b6 ♖b8 = Lputian-Suba, Debrecen Echt 1992; 14 a5 ♘xc4 15 ♕xc4 ♘d7! =) 14...♕e7 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 17 ♘b6 ♖ae8 18 ♗g5 h6 19 ♗h4 and now:

b31) After 19...♕c7!? 20 f4 ♘ed7 Black played 21 ♘c4?! (21 ♘xd7! is more awkward) in M.Kovacs-Ničevski, Dečin 1978, and now Black should

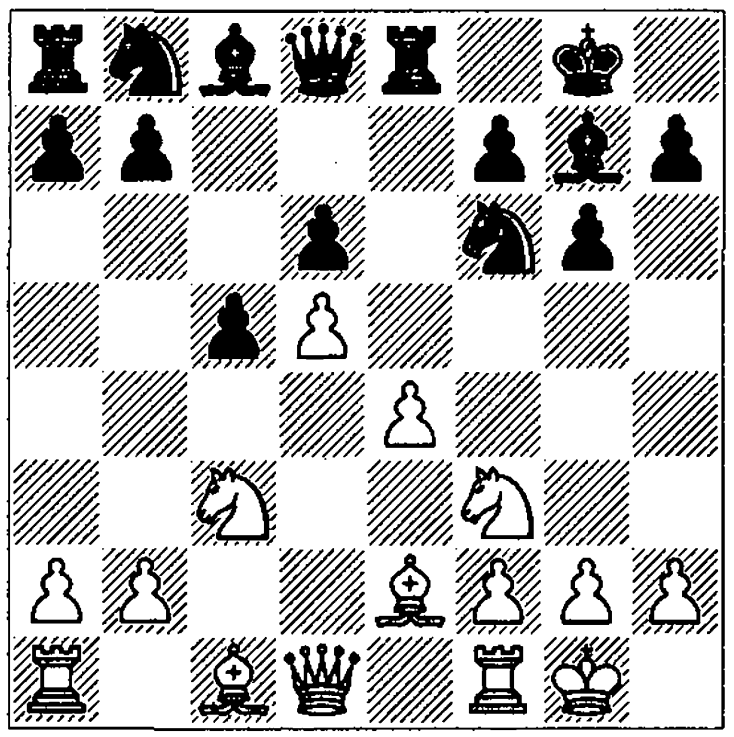
have played Kovacs's own proposal of 21...♘xe4! 22 ♘xe4 f5 23 ♘cxd6 ♕xd6 24 ♘xd6 ♖xe2 with at least equality.

b32) I prefer Kapengut's 19...g5!? 20 ♗g3 ♘fd7, since ...f5 will arrive before any ♘d1-e3 manoeuvre. After 21 f4 gxf4 22 ♘xd7 he continues 22...♘xd7? 23 ♖xf4, which must favour White due to his control of f5. However, 22...♕xd7! forces matters: 23 ♖xf4 (23 ♗xf4 f5 =) 23...f5 24 ♖af1 ♘g6! 25 ♖4f3 (25 ♖xf5? ♖xf5 26 ♖xf5 ♗xc3!) 25...♗d4+ 26 ♔h1 ♗xc3 27 bxc3 ♖xe4 with a small edge for Black.

So ultimately, 11 ♘d2 is no threat to Black's move-order of 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4.

To summarize: our *preferred* course against the natural move-order of the Classical Main given in this section would be 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4, when 11 ♗f4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 is analysed thoroughly in Line B112 of Chapter 9. That is a fairly easy and dynamic position to play, but it is not available against an early ♘d2. What follows after the text-move (9...♖e8) is another system involving ...♘bd7 which could be used against both the move-order in this section and against early ♘d2s by White (that is, 7 ♘d2 or 8 ♘d2). Finally, in Line B, I will suggest a system involving ...♘a6 ideas, which is also applicable to the move-order before us, should White play 10 ♘d2 next instead of 10 ♕c2 (see the next note).

We now return to the position after 9...♖e8 *(D)*: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10 ♘d2

10 ♕c2 is the only other logical way to defend the e-pawn. One reason that this isn't seen more often is 10...♘a6, but it's also worth noting that 10...♗g4! is an excellent alternative which has consistently equalized in limited experience. I actually prefer that move, which one might compare with similar lines in Chapter 9. Returning to 10...♘a6, White has these options:

a) 11 ♗xa6?! bxa6 and ...♖b8 is just about always bad for White.

b) 11 ♘d2 ♖b8 =; e.g., 12 h3 (12 f4 ♘c7 13 a4? ♘fxd5! 14 exd5 ♗xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♖xe2 ∓) 12...♘c7 13 a4? (but otherwise ...b5) 13...♘fxd5! 14 exd5 ♗xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♖xe2 16 ♕f3 (Schneider) 16...♖e5! ∓.

c) 11 ♖e1 ♗g4 (11...♘c7 is a reasonable alternative) 12 ♗f4 and now:

c1) 12...♖c8 is logical, preparing ...c4 and ...♘b4.

c2) 12...c4!? 13 ♗xc4 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘h5 15 ♗g3 ♗e5 16 ♗xa6 (16 ♗b5) 16...bxa6 17 ♘e2 ♕f6 gave Black some compensation in Nemet-Gobet,

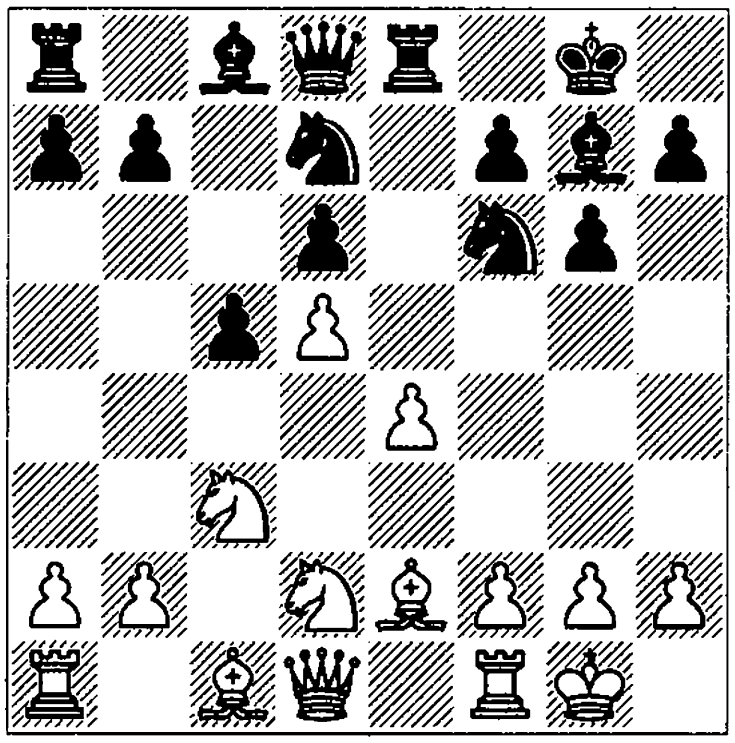
Biel 1983. This is awfully speculative, however.

c3) A good alternative is 12...♘h5 13 ♗g5 ♗f6!? (Black should investigate 13...f6 14 ♗e3 f5!, having in mind 15 ♘g5 f4! or 15 ♗g5 ♗f6) 14 ♗e3 ♘c7 (14...c4?! 15 ♘d2 ♗xe2 16 ♖xe2 ♘b4 17 ♕b1 gives White a slight advantage – *ECO*) 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♘g7 with the ideas ...b5 and ...♗e5 followed by ...f5.

d) 11 a3 ♘c7 12 ♖e1 (12 ♗g5 ♖b8 13 a4 a6 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 = Fedorov-Maslak, St Petersburg Chigorin mem 2000) 12...♖b8 13 ♗f4 b5 14 b4!? ♘xe4! 15 ♘xe4 ♗f5 16 ♘fd2 ♘xd5 = Veksler-Shestoperov, Omsk 1973.

e) 11 ♗f4 ♘b4 12 ♕b1 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗e3 (14 ♗h4 ♘f4) 14...f5 15 a3 fxe4 16 ♘g5 ♘d3 17 ♗xh5 gxh5 18 ♘gxe4 c4 19 ♕d1 ♗f5 20 ♕f3 ♕d7 21 ♗g5, Portisch-Adamski, Raach Z 1969, and now there could follow 21...♖f8!? 22 ♕xh5 ♗xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♗xb2!, which is complex but dynamically equal (Kapengut's "23...♘xb2 ∓" has several good answers, especially *Hiarcs*'s 24 ♕h4!).

10...♘bd7 *(D)*



In the next section (Line B), we will examine the alternative 10...♘a6 intending ...♘c7.

Now we have:

A1: 11 h3 190
A2: 11 a4 194

11 a4 (or transpositions to it) has been the overwhelming choice of players for many years. But 11 h3 causes unique problems and should be considered separately.

There are several meaningful alternatives:

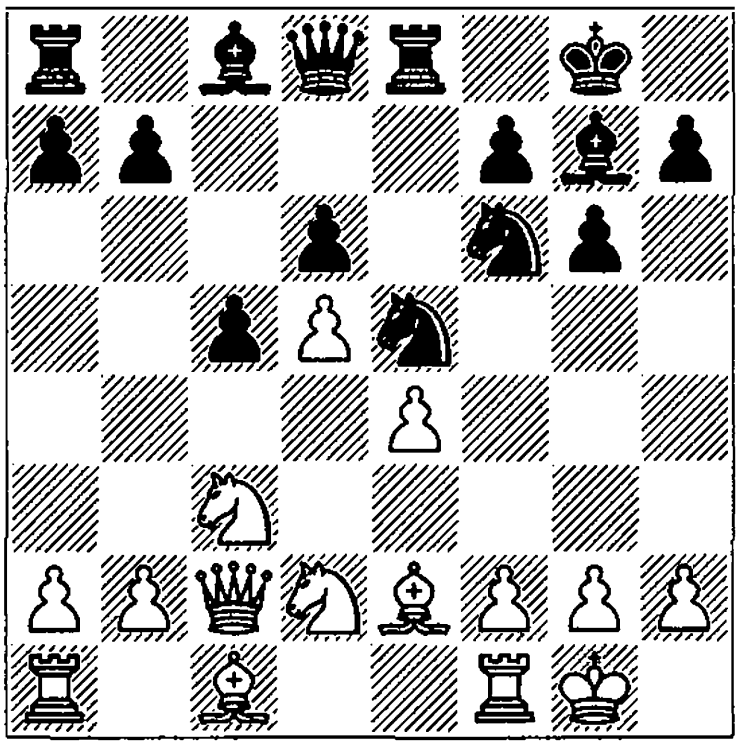
a) 11 ♖e1 ♘e5 (11...h6 intending ...g5 is also logical and should be compared with the main lines) 12 ♘f1 (12 f4 ♘eg4 13 ♗f3 h5! 14 h3 ♘h7! with an attack, according to Schneider) 12...a6 13 a4 ♖b8 (13...h5!?) 14 h3 h6 15 ♘g3 g5 16 ♗e3 g4!? with complications – analysis by Schneider.

b) 11 f4 is a well-known variation of the Four Pawns Attack. In somewhat abridged form, the main line goes 11...c4! 12 ♔h1 (12 ♗xc4 ♘c5 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 =) 12...♘c5 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 15 ♘xc4 ♖e8 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗h4 ♘ce4 (17...♗f5!? 18 d6 ♕d7 should also be fine for Black, Gorelov-Petrushin, Aktiubinsk 1985) 18 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♗g3 ♕xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗f3 ♖d4 22 ♖ad1, Chandler-Sax, Sarajevo 1985, and now Schneider gives 22...♘b4! 23 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♖d1 ♗f6 25 a3 ♘c6 26 ♗xc6 bxc6 27 ♖d6 ♗e6 28 ♖xc6 ♖d8 ∓, due to Black's bishop-pair.

c) 11 ♔h1 ♘e5 12 h3 (12 f4?! ♘eg4 13 ♖f3 ♘h5! 14 ♕e1 f5! was

slightly better for Black in Zaltsman-Lobron, New York 1983) 12...g5 = *ECO*.

d) 11 ♕c2 has a number of reasonable answers such as 11...♘b6 and perhaps even 11...♘h5!? (Boleslavsky's move, made popular by Fischer's use of it versus Spassky in 1972), but the consistent move for us is 11...♘e5 *(D)*.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Then 12 a4 transposes to the main line, while White can deviate as follows:

d1) 12 h3 g5! 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘d7 =. Compare the main lines.

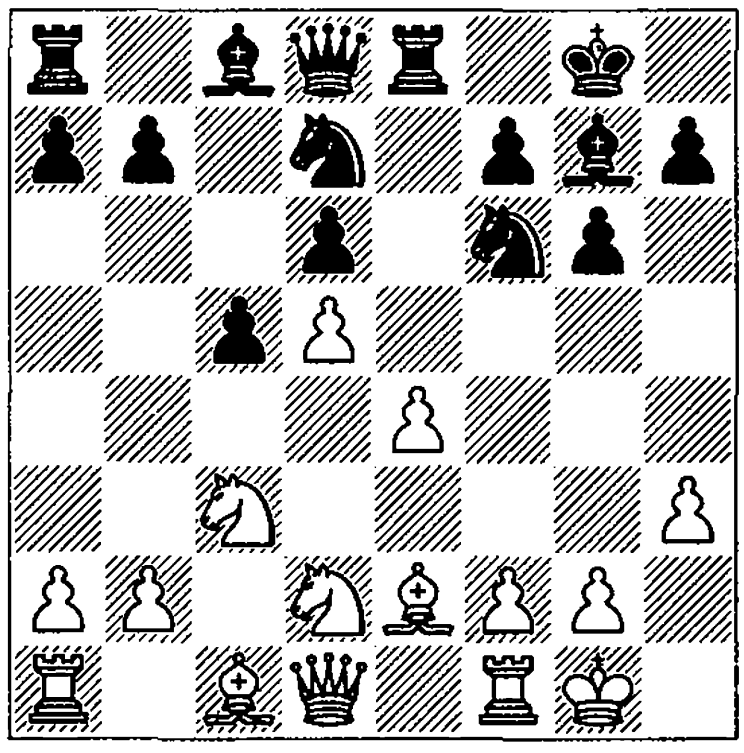
d2) Ambitious, but very loose is 12 f4!? ♘eg4 13 ♘f3 (13 ♘c4 ♘xe4! 14 ♘xe4 ♗d4+ 15 ♔h1 ♘xh2! ∓) 13...♘xe4! (I think that this is more interesting than 13...♘h5!? 14 h3 ♘h6 15 ♔h2 f5 = Toynt-Shamkovich, USA 1976, although it's probably no better) 14 ♘xe4 ♗f5 15 ♗d3 c4 16 ♕xc4 ♖c8 17 ♕b4 a5 (or 17...♗xe4 18 ♗xe4 a5 =) 18 ♕xd6 ♗xe4 19 ♕xd8 ♖cxd8 20 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 = 21 ♖d1 ♖e2 22 h3!? ♘f2 23 ♖d2 ♖xd2 24 ♗xd2 ♘d3! 25 ♗xa5 ♖xd5 26 ♗c3 ♗xc3 27 bxc3 ♘xf4 ∓.

d3) Ineffective is 12 ♖e1, when various moves equalize (for example, 12...g5; also, since f4 always allows ...♕h4, there are lines like 12...h5 13 a4 ♘h7), but 12...♘fg4!? provides a bit of fun as well: 13 h3 ♘xf2! 14 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 15 ♔f1 ♗xh3 ultimately leads to a draw, as I leave the reader to work out.

d4) 12 b3 ♘fg4!? (after 12...g5 13 ♗b2, both 13...g4 and 13...♘g6 are considered equal) 13 h3 ♘h6 14 f4?! ♘eg4! 15 ♘f3 (15 ♗xg4 ♗d4+ 16 ♔h1 ♘xg4 17 ♘f3! ♘f6!) 15...♕a5 16 e5 (16 ♗d2 ♘e3!) 16...♗f5 17 ♕d2 dxe5 18 hxg4 exf4 19 ♗b2 ♘xg4 intending ...♖e3 with a terrific attack, Panczyk-Kindermann, Polanica Zdroj 1984.

A1)

11 h3 *(D)*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This is infrequently played, but very tricky. Now the usual move 11...♘e5 is weak in view of 12 f4. So Black usually plays...

11...g5!?

The lines that follow this are positionally ugly for Black, who is depending upon tactics. So we should definitely consider some calmer approaches as well. The following alternatives deserve attention, and because they are less forcing and avoid oversimplification, they may even be the best way to play for a win:

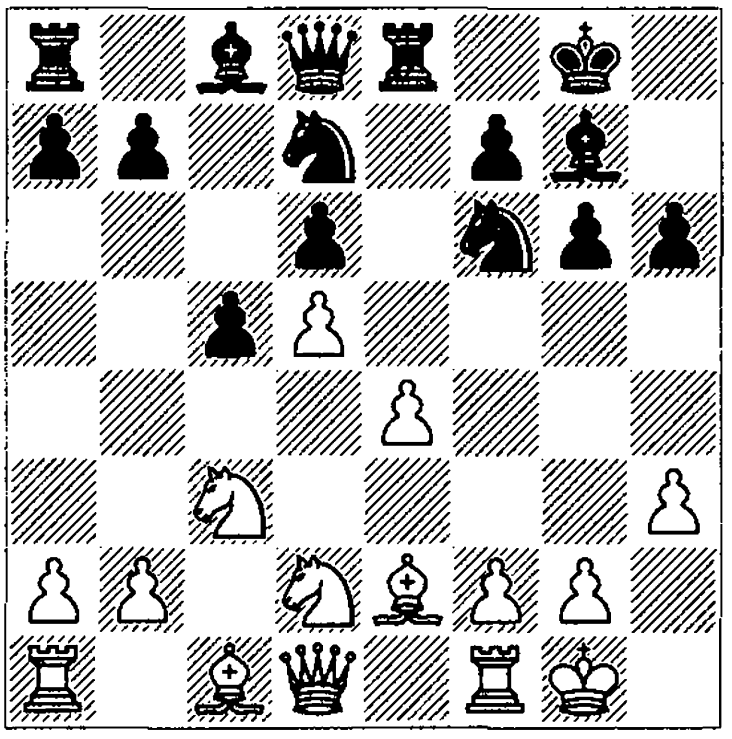
a) 11...♘b6 and now:

a1) 12 a4 ♗d7 (12...a6 13 a5 ♘bd7 14 ♘c4!? ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♘xd6 ♖d4 17 ♕c2 ♖xd5 18 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♗f3 ♖d6, probably equal, strongly resembles line 'c' but without Black's kingside weaknesses, Pappaceno-Bezviner, Nassau 1992) 13 a5 ♘c8 14 ♖e1 (14 f4 b5 {or 14...♖b8} 15 axb6 ♘xb6 is unclear) 14...♖b8 15 ♕c2 b5 16 axb6 axb6 = intending ...b5 and meeting 17 ♗b5? with 17...♗xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♘xd5.

a2) 12 ♖e1 a6 13 a4 (13 ♗f1 ♕c7 14 ♘f3 ♘bd7 15 a4 b6 16 ♗f4 ♘h5 with the idea 17 ♗h2 ♗b7 18 g4 ♘hf6 19 e5 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5 dxe5) 13...♗d7 14 a5 ♘c8 15 ♗f1 ♘a7 16 ♘c4 ♘b5 =. We've seen this kind of reorganization many times in the Fianchetto System.

It's not clear that White gets any advantage after 11...♘b6; in any case, it would be a small one.

b) 11...h6 *(D)* is both restrained and sensible.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Then Black is ready to play ...g5 without that pawn being exposed in lines like 12 a4 g5 or 12 ♖e1 g5. One should note that even in lines where Black plays ...g4, the move ...h6 is not wasted since it prevents ♗g5. Here are two other continuations:

b1) 12 ♕c2 g5 13 ♘c4 (13 a4 ♘e5 14 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 is similar to note 'b' to White's 12th move in Line A2; 15...g4!? could follow) 13...♘b6 14 ♘xb6 (14 f4 ♘xc4 15 ♗xc4 g4! {15...gxf4 16 ♗xf4 ♘h5 is unclear; 15...♘h5!?} 16 e5!? dxe5 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♗f4 ♖h5! ∓) 14...axb6!? 15 ♗e3 ♗d7 16 a4 ♕e7 17 ♗d3 (17 f3 ♘h5 18 ♕b3 f5) 17...g4 18 hxg4 ♘xg4 19 ♗f4 ♗e5 20 ♕d2 ♕h4 with good chances.

b2) 12 f4!? is a position from the 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 Four Pawns Attack in the King's Indian Defence, but with h3 and ...h6 thrown in. White's h3 seriously weakens g3 in lines where Black plays ...♘e4 or ...♘h5, while the move ...h6 prevents ♗g5, a common idea for White. On the other hand, h3 prevents the move ...♘g4, a tactical leap that Black uses in many lines. The reader is invited to compare the normal ♘d2 Four Pawns variations (which are briefly discussed in note 'b' to White's 11th move in Line A).

b21) I believe that Black probably does about as well as usual in the lines with 12...c4; here are just a few brief ideas to give an idea of the play, with both sides having alternatives on more or less every move:

b211) 13 a4 ♘c5 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♘xc4 exf4! 16 ♗xf4 ♘ce4 =.

b212) 13 ♔h1 ♘c5 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♘c4 ♖e8 (or 16...♖f5 17 ♗f4 g5! 18 ♗e5 ♘fe4 =) 17 ♗f4 (White would normally play 17 ♗g5 here) 17...♘ce4 18 ♗f3 ♗f5 with equality.

b213) 13 ♗xc4 ♘c5 14 ♕c2 (14 ♖e1 ♘h5 =; 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♘f3 ♖e8 =) 14...♘h5 15 ♗b5 ♗d7 16 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 17 ♔h2 ♕e7 18 ♖f3 ♖ac8 =.

b22) Actually, I think that Black should probably toss in 12...a6 13 a4:

b221) If Black continues 13...c4, he has prevented ♘b5 or ♗b5 and opened up more ideas, especially after 14 ♗xc4 – compare lines under 'b21'.

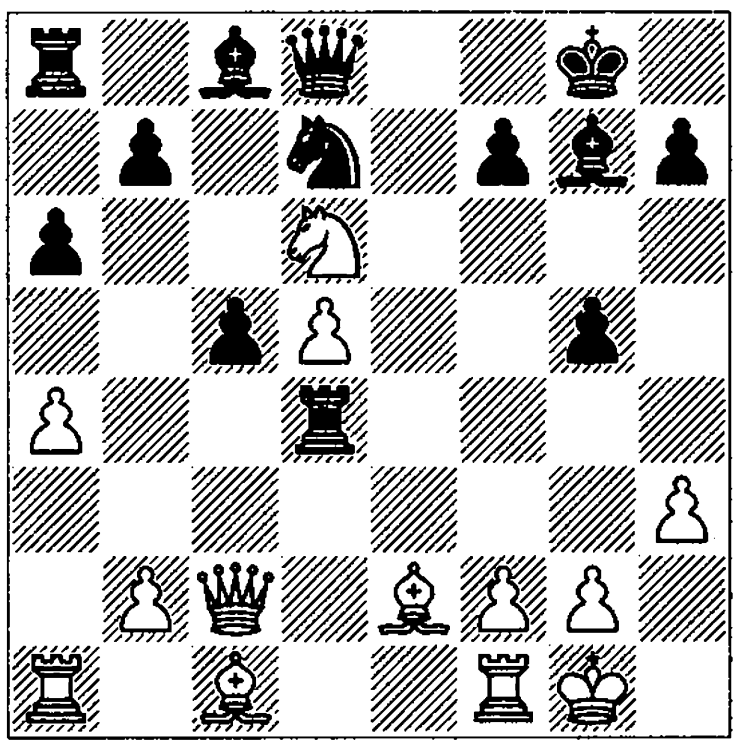
b222) Black can directly make use of ...h6 by 13...♘h7!?. The idea is to play for ...g5 and/or ...♘df6. For example, 14 ♘c4 (14 ♔h1 can be met by 14...♘df8 15 ♗f3 g5!? or 14...♗d4!? 15 ♘b3!? ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♖xe4 17 ♗d3 ♖e8 intending 18 f5 g5) 14...♕e7 (or just 14...♘b6 =) 15 ♗f3 g5 16 ♗e3 gxf4 17 ♗xf4 ♘e5 18 ♘b6 ♖b8 19 ♕d2 ♘g5 20 ♗h5 ♘g6!.

b23) 12...♖b8 13 ♔h1 ♘b6!? is noteworthy; e.g., 14 a4 a6 15 a5 ♘a8 intending ...♘c7.

I don't think that Black need fear 11...h6 12 f4, but it certainly makes for interesting play.

c) 11...a6 12 a4 (12 ♘c4 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♘xd6 ♖d4 ∓; 12 f4 b5) 12...g5!? 13 ♘c4 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♘xd6 ♖d4 16 ♕c2 *(D)*.

B



16...♖xd5!? (compare the main line {i.e. without ...a6 and a4}, in which Black plays ...♘b6 in an equivalent position) 17 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 18 ♗f3 ♖d6 19 ♗xb7 ♖b8 20 ♗e4 h6. Black is structurally bankrupt, but he has pressure down the b-file, more active pieces, and, soon, a dominating bishop on d4. That's probably still not enough to secure complete equality against White's powerful bishops, but here are some sample lines:

c1) 21 f4 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h2 g4!? 23 ♖a3! h5 (23...♕h4) 24 ♗f5 ♕h4 25 ♖g3 ♘f6 26 b3 ♖e8.

c2) 21 ♖b1 ♗d4 and now:

c21) 22 h4?! ♘f6 23 ♗f5 (23 hxg5 ♘xe4 24 ♕xe4 hxg5 =) 23...♘d5 24 hxg5 hxg5 25 ♗d2 ♖h6 26 g3 (26 ♕c1 ♕d6) 26...♕f6 27 b3 ♔g7! 28 ♕e4 ♘e7 29 ♗d7 ♖bh8 –+.

c22) 22 ♔h1 ♘f6 23 ♗f5 ♖db6 24 f4 (24 b3 ♕d5 ∓) 24...♘h5! ∓.

c23) 22 ♗e3 ♗xe3 23 fxe3 ♘f6.

c24) 22 ♗f5 ♘e5 23 b3 ♘c6 ±.

c25) 22 b3 ♘f6 23 ♗f5 ♖db6 24 h4 ♕d5 25 hxg5 hxg5 26 ♗xg5 ♖xb3 27 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 28 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 ±.

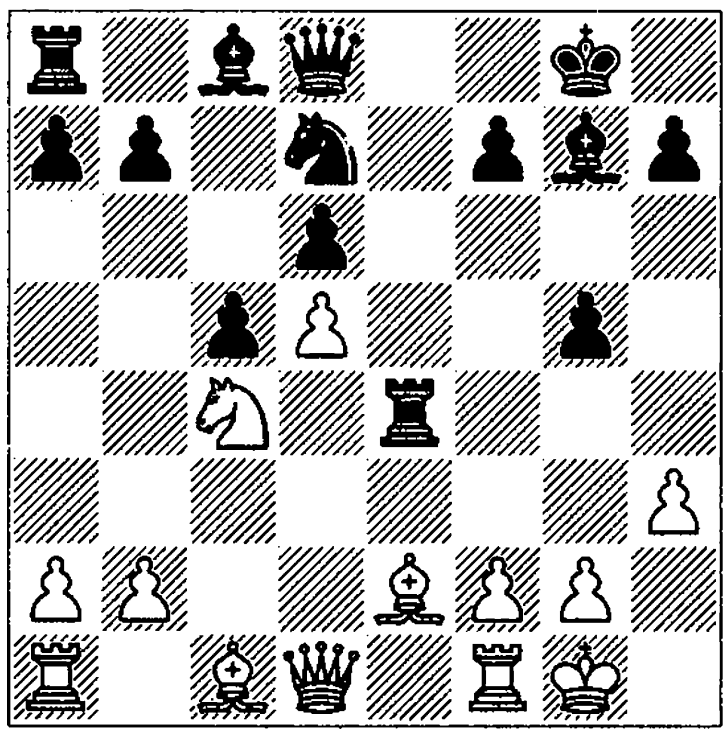
In general, Black should not be optimistic about achieving full theoretical equality in this line, but his position is better and more resilient than one might have supposed. The main line with 11...g5 is probably more reliable.

12 ♘c4!

For 12 a4 ♘e5, see note 'b' to White 12th move in Line A2. After 12 ♘f3, 12...g4! is fine.

The best alternative is 12 ♖e1 ♘e5 13 ♘f1 h6 14 ♘g3 a6 15 a4, when I like 15...g4!; e.g., 16 hxg4 ♘fxg4 17 ♗f4 (17 f3? ♕h4) 17...♕h4 18 ♕d2 ♕h2+ 19 ♔f1 h5 20 ♗f3 ♗d7 with an obscure position that looks promising for Black.

12...♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 *(D)*



14 ♘xd6

14 ♗d3 ♖h4! 15 ♘xd6 ♘e5 16 ♘f5 (this position first arose in the game Donner-Hartoch, Wijk aan Zee 1972) 16...♘xd3! 17 ♕xd3 and instead of theory's 17...c4, I think that 17...♗xf5 18 ♕xf5 ♖d4 19 ♗xg5 ♕xd5 is best.

14...♖d4 15 ♕c2 ♘b6!?

One of two methods here. The other is 15...♖xd5 16 ♘xc8 ♖xc8, but since including ...a6 and a4 probably improves Black's chances, I refer you to note 'c' to Black's 11th move.

16 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♗e3 ♖b4

The exchange sacrifice 17...♘xd5 18 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 was advocated by Norwood in his book, but 19 ♕f5! is essentially a refutation.

18 ♗g4 ♖xb2

The immediate 18...♖c7 19 ♖ad1! ♖xb2 20 ♕f5! ♗f6 21 d6 is worse for Black.

19 ♕c1

Here my ever-alert editor pointed out that 19...♖c7? 20 ♗xg5 ♕xd5, as in Lahav-Psakhis, Tel-Aviv 1990, allows 21 ♖e1!, which practically winning. Thus, Black's best chance is...

19...♖b8!

...when his own weaknesses make an awful sight and White has two good bishops to boot. But Black is counting upon his extra pawn, piece activity and threats against the d-pawn to confuse the issue. White can hardly be unhappy with his structure, but still needs a way to neutralize Black's initiative. Here are some lines:

a) 20 ♗xg5 ♕xd5 21 ♖d1 (21 ♗f3 ♕f5; 21 ♕f4 ♗e5 22 ♕f5 ♗d4) 21...♗d4.

b) 20 ♗xc5 ♖b5 21 ♖b1 ♖xb1 22 ♕xb1 ♕xd5 is about equal.

c) 20 ♖d1!? ♖b4!? 21 ♗xg5 ♕d6.

d) 20 ♕xc5 ♕xd5 21 ♕c7 (21 ♕e7 h6 22 ♖ad1 ♕e5 23 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 24 ♕xd8+ ♔h7; 21 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 22 ♗xg5 h6 23 ♗h4 ♖e8 {23...♘c3!?} 24 ♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♗f6 should be drawn) 21...♗e5 (or 21...♖e8!?, and then 22 ♗f3 ♕e6 23 ♗xb7 h6 24 ♖fe1 ♘c4 or 22 ♖fd1 ♕c6 23 ♖ac1 ♕xc7 24 ♖xc7 ♗e5 25 ♖xb7 ♘c4 26 ♖xb2 ♘xe3 =) 22 ♕e7 h6 23 ♗h5 (23 ♖fd1 ♕e4) 23...♖b5 24 ♖fd1 ♕e6 25 ♕xe6 fxe6; the combination of Black's extra pawn and White's bishops will very likely lead to a draw.

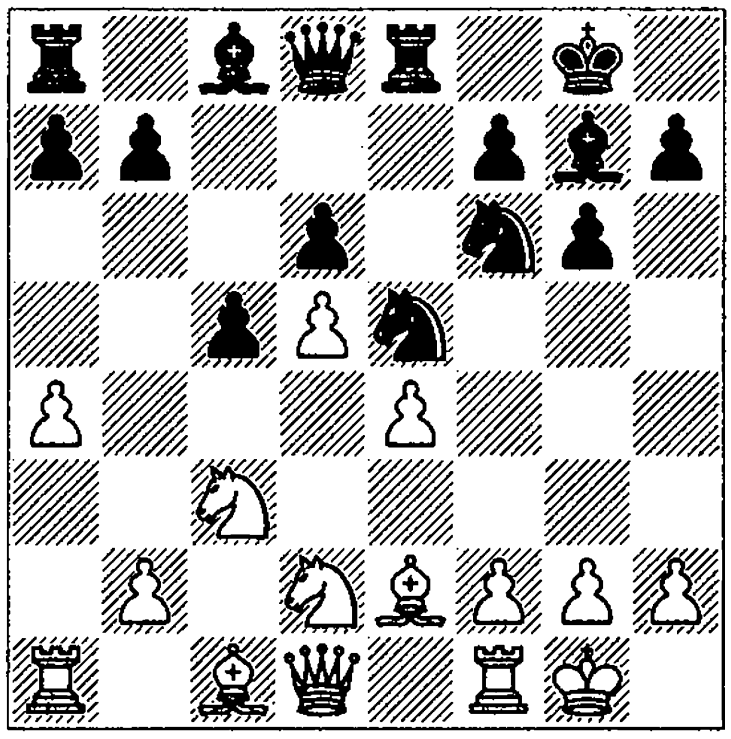
This has been a rather long look at the underanalysed 11 h3. Black has the choice between the active but anti-positional variations 11...g5 or 11...a6 12 a4 g5, of which the former seems better, and the solid ideas of 11...h6 and 11...♘b6, both of which need tests.

A2)

11 a4

The normal choice. White wants to clamp down on Black's queenside expansion without delay, and as a side benefit, he gets the option of a rook-lift to a3 at some point.

11...♘e5 *(D)*


W

This is the key position for the ...♘bd7 defence, which arises in most of the games. Black will normally play ...g5 next, to secure the knight on e5 against f4. White's most important idea, ♘c4, may now be answered by ...♘xc4, after which Black may reoccupy e5 by ...♘d7-e5 or ...♘g4-e5.

In general, Black pursues a dark-square strategy on the kingside and in the centre. We shall see, for example, ...♘g6-f4 or, after the natural move f3, ...♘h5-f4. Sometimes moves such as ...♗e5 (or ...♗d4) and ...♕f6 will reinforce that theme. If he deems it necessary to counteract ideas like f4 or even ♘f3, Black may continue with ...g4 in order to restrict White's kingside. In that case ...♘h5-f4 can be played without a preliminary f3 on White's part, and Black's queen can join the attack from h4 or g5.

The strategy just outlined is unusual in the Benoni, and this is certainly the first time that we have seen such a piece arrangement as Black's primary defensive method. Its main drawback is the surrender of the f5-square to White; a knight posted on f5, for example, can both disrupt Black's game and serve to block his aggressive plans. A related problem is that White might enforce f4 despite Black's efforts to prevent it by ...g5. After ...gxf4 Black gains a permanent outpost on e5, to be sure, but White's f-file (and further control of f5) can also be influential. I think that what follows will

demonstrate how these ideas can be successfully counteracted.

The ...♘e5/...g5 plan is more fun and requires more skill than the ...♘a6-c7 schemes in Line B, but it is also riskier. The reader may want to compare these two systems before deciding upon a personal repertoire.

12 ♕c2

This remains the most popular move for White. 12 ♕c2 reinforces e4 and thus allows the move ♘c4. It also prepares b3 and ♗b2 by protecting the knight on c3, and opens up d1 for a knight, since the idea of ♘e3-f5 is logical after ...g5.

However, in this case the alternatives are roughly as good, and must be looked at very carefully:

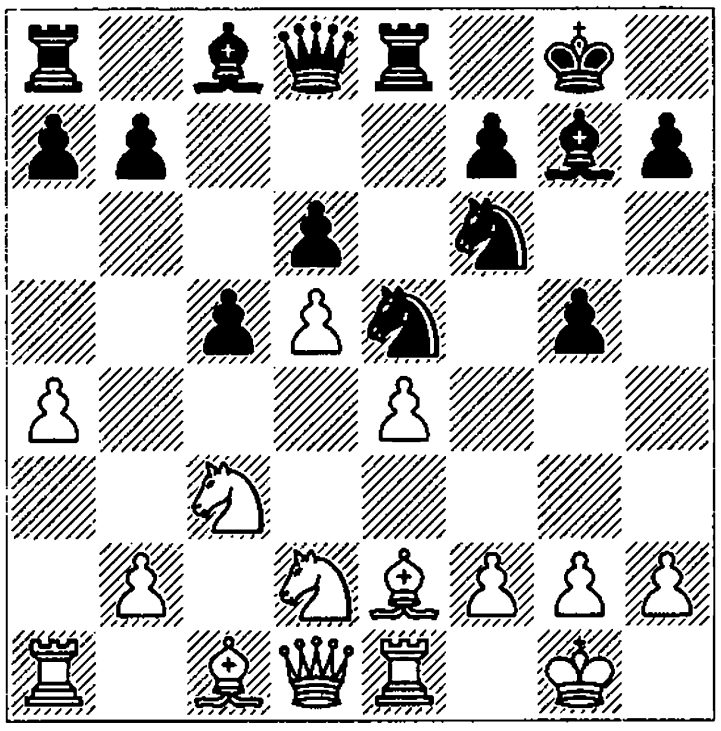
a) 12 ♘db1!? h5!? (12...♘fg4!? 13 ♘a3 f5 =; 12...♕e7 Nunn) 13 h3 ♘h7! (an idea we have seen before, this time tactically based) 14 f4 ♘g4! 15 ♕e1, Traito-Agapov, USSR 1987, 15...♗d4+! 16 ♔h1 ♘gf6 17 ♗f3 (17 ♘d2 ♗xc3 ∓) 17...♗f5 (∓ Agapov; Schneider disagrees, but I think White really is in trouble) 18 ♕e2 ♘xe4 (18...♗xc3 19 ♘xc3 ♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♘f6 is very strong for Black) 19 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 and now Schneider's line continued 20...f5 21 ♘c3 ♘f6 22 ♕b5 fxe4 23 f5, but Black should prefer 20...♘f6 ∓.

b) 12 h3 g5 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ (13...g4 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 has also been played) 14 ♗xf3 h6 15 ♖e1 (15 ♖b1 b6 16 b4 ♘d7 17 ♘b5 ♘e5 18 ♗h5 a6 19 ♘c3 ♘g6 20 ♕c2 ♖a7! = Schneider; 15 ♖a3 b6 16 ♕c2 a6 17 ♘e2! ♗d7 18 ♘g3 b5 = Tisdall-Arnason, Brighton 1981) 15...a6 (here this move is not bad, because enforcement of ...b5 or control of the b-file is the next consistent step; 15...b6!? 16 ♕c2 a6 is the solid alternative) 16 a5 ♖b8 17 ♗d2 ♗d7 = Tunik-Pigusov, Russian Ch (St Petersburg) 1998.

c) 12 ♖a3 goes well with a4, threatening to swing over to the kingside in many lines. It is useful, however, that Black has not spent a tempo on ...a6, and thus has an extra tempo with which to implement his dark-square strategy: 12...g5 13 ♖e1 (13 ♕c2 transposes to the main line; 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 g4 15 ♗e2 ♘xe4 16 ♗xg4 is comfortable for Black after 16...♕h4 or 16...♘xc3 and ...♕h4) 13...♘g6 14 ♗b5 ♖e7 (also possible is 14...♖f8; note that Black avoids ...♗d7 and the exchange of bishops because that would give up protection of f5 – yet if a white knight is far from f5, he might allow this for the sake of taking over light squares following ...c4 and ...♘c5 or ...♘e5) 15 ♘f1 a6 16 ♗d3 (16 ♗c4 h6 17 ♘g3 ♗d7 18 ♗d2 ♕c7 19 ♕c2 ♖ae8 20 a5 ♘g4! 21 h3 ♘4e5 22 ♗f1 ♘h4! ∓ intending ..f5, Stempin-Suba, Prague 1985) 16...h6 17 ♘g3 ♖b8!? (17...♕c7) 18 a5 ♕c7 19 ♗f1 ♗d7 20 ♗d2 ♖be8! = A.Petrosian-Anikaev, Telavi 1982.

d) 12 ♖e1 reinforces e4 and prepares ♘f1, but it takes away a defender of f2 and renders an early f4 less likely. Black plays 12...g5 *(D)*, when White has tried these moves:

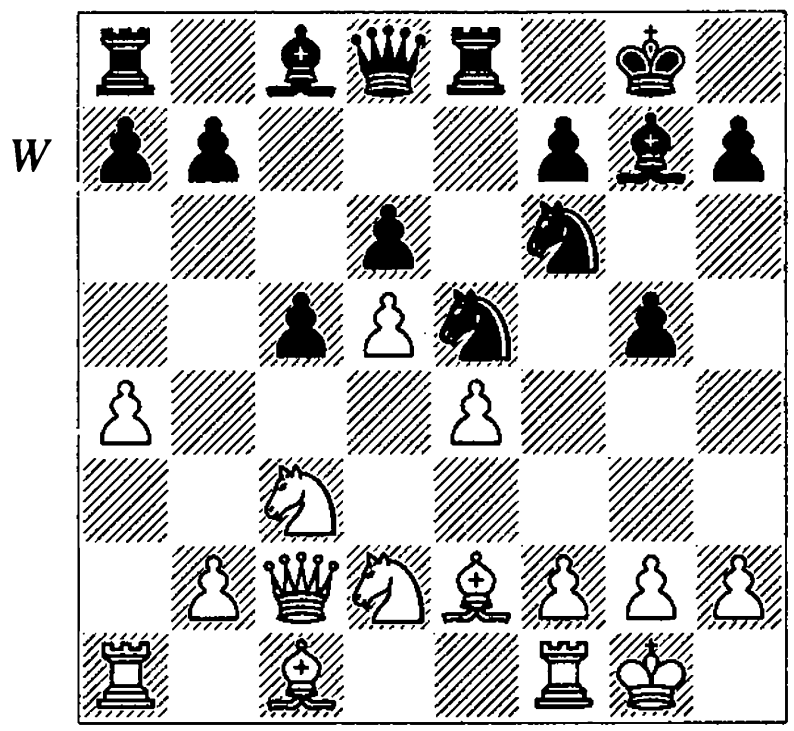
d1) 13 ♘c4 ♘xc4 14 ♗xc4 ♘g4 15 h3 ♘e5 16 ♗b5 ♖f8 17 ♗e2 ♔h8 = Kraidman-Tisdall, Gausdal 1983.



d2) 13 ♗b5 ♖e7 (exchanging light-squared bishops would leave f5 very weak, especially with ♘f1-g3-f5 in the air) 14 ♘f1 h6 15 ♘g3 ♘g6 16 ♗d2 ♘g4 17 h3 ♘4e5 18 ♘h5 ♗h8 19 f4 gxf4 20 ♘xf4 a6 21 ♗f1 ♔h7 22 ♘h5 (Schneider gives 22 ♕h5'!' ♗g7 23 a5, continuing 23...♖e8 24 ♗e2 ♕h4 25 ♕xh4 '±', but either 23...b5 24 axb6 ♕xb6 or even, at the end of Schneider's line, 25...b5 looks fine for Black) 22...♖e8 23 g3 (23 ♕c1 ♖g8 24 ♗xh6 ♘f3+! 25 gxf3 ♘e5+ 26 ♔h1 ♘xf3 –+) 23...♘h4! 24 ♖e3 (24 gxh4? ♖g8+ 25 ♗g2 ♗xh3 26 ♘f4 ♕xh4 gives Black a winning attack) 24...♕g5 (or 24...♖g8) 25 ♔h1 ♘hf3 26 ♖xf3 ♕xh5 27 ♖f4 ♕g6 28 ♖h4 (28 ♕e1 ♖g8 29 g4 ♘xg4! 30 hxg4 ♗xg4 31 ♕f2 is given by Schneider, but then Black has 31...♗e5! ∓) 28...♕xg3 29 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 30 ♕e1 ♕xe1 31 ♗xe1 ♘g6 32 ♗d2 ♖e5 ∓ Ftačnik-Womacka, Bundesliga 1990/1.

d3) 13 ♘f1 (the most direct) 13...h6 14 ♘g3 (14 a5 a6! 15 ♘e3 ♖b8 =) 14...♘g6 15 a5 (15 ♗d2 ♘f4 16 ♗b5 ♖e7 17 ♕c2 ♘g4 = Stohl-Kindermann, Stary Smokovec 1986) 15...a6! 16 ♗d2 ♖b8 17 ♕c2 ♘f4 18 ♗c4 ♘g4 19 ♘ce2 ♕f6 = Gyimesi-Pigusov, Koszalin 1999, having in mind 20 ♘xf4 gxf4 21 ♗c3 fxg3! 22 ♗xf6 gxf2+ 23 ♕xf2 ♘xf2 24 ♗xg7 ♘h3+ with a slight advantage for Black.

12...g5 *(D)*



13 ♖a3

Considered best by Schneider, and the main line in *ECO*. The move ♖a3 appears in several variations of the Benoni, but never so prominently as in the Classical lines. It serves primarily for defence of the kingside. Described in the style of Nimzowitsch, the commander of White's army pokes his head over the hill to assess the strength of Black's attack on his monarch. He realizes that his own forces are themselves ample for defence if he rushes them across the plains in time. His divisions will not only serve in defence, but in the case of a reckless enemy advance they will be used to launch a counterattack against the now-exposed king. It is therefore up to Black's forces

to improve their own positions rather than rush precipitously forward.

Back on the chessboard, several of White's options echo the themes in the previous note. Of these, 13 ♘d1 and 13 ♘c4 are the most important:

a) 13 b3 g4 (or 13...b6 14 ♗b2 a6 15 ♘d1 ♖a7! 16 ♘e3 ♖ae7 = Vranesić-Tarjan, Chicago 1973) 14 ♗b2 ♘h5 (14...a6 15 a5 ♗d7) 15 g3 (15 ♘c4 ♘xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♘f4 17 ♘d1 ♗e5 = Gligorić-Tatai, Venice 1971), and here I like simply 15...♘f6! =, now that g3 has weakened White's kingside.

b) 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘g4 (or 14...♘d7 15 ♗g4 ♘e5 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 = intending ...c4 and ...♘d3, as given by Nunn) 15 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 16 f4 gxf4 17 ♗xf4 ♗h5 18 ♘b5 ♗e5 = Kharitonov-Chekhov, Yaroslavl 1982; Black can pressure the e-pawn.

c) 13 ♘d1 is unmentioned in *ECO*, but nevertheless merits attention:

c1) 13...g4 14 ♘e3 (14 ♗b5 ♖e7 15 ♖e1 {15 ♘e3 ♘g6!?} 15...a6 16 ♗f1 b6!? =) 14...a6! (14...♘h5?! 15 f4! gxf3 16 ♘xf3 ♘f4 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♘g4 with advantage – Psakhis) 15 f4!? (15 ♖e1 ♘g6 =) 15...gxf3 16 ♘xf3 ♘g6 17 ♘f5?! ♗xf5! 18 exf5 ♘e7 19 ♗g5 ♕d7 and Black is slightly better.

c2) 13...♘g6 keeps pressure on e4: 14 ♘e3 (14 f3? ♘xd5; 14 ♗b5 ♖e7 15 ♘e3 a6 16 ♗c4 ♗d7 {or 16...g4} 17 ♘f5 ♗xf5 18 exf5 ♘e5 19 ♗e2 g4 =) 14...a6 (14...♘f4 15 ♗b5 ♖e7 16 ♖e1 g4 is unclear) 15 ♖e1 g4 16 ♖b1 (Pelaez-R.Grinburg, Buenos Aires OL 1978) 16...♘f4! 17 b4 (17 ♗f1 ♕e7 18 b4 ♘xe4 ∓) 17...♘xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 b6 19 bxc5 bxc5 20 ♗b2 ♖a7! = intending ...♖ae7.

d) After 13 ♘c4 ♘xc4 14 ♗xc4 Black seems to have a number of satisfactory options:

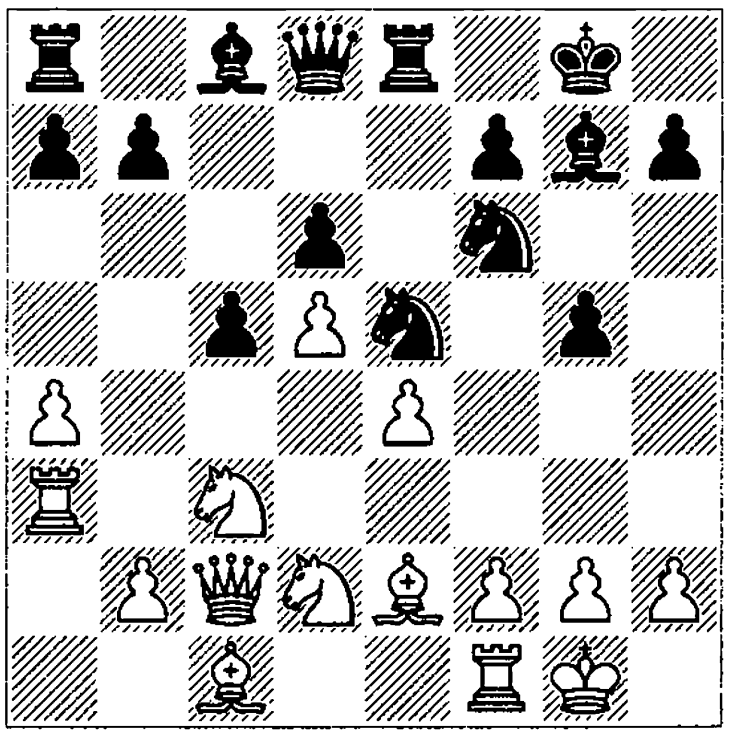
d1) 14...♘d7 15 ♘e2 a6 16 ♘g3 (16 a5 ♘e5 17 ♗b3 ♗d7! =) 16...♘e5 17 ♗e2 ♖b8 18 f4 gxf4 19 ♗xf4 ♘g6 20 ♗d2 ♗e5 21 ♗c3, Kratochvil-Poloch, Česke Budejovice 1999, and here 21...♗xg3! 22 hxg3 ♕g5 gives Black at least equality in view of White's weaknesses.

d2) Also playable is 14...♘g4 15 ♘e2 ♕e7 16 ♘g3 ♗d4! 17 h3 ♕e5 18 ♖a3 ♘f6 = 19 ♖f3!? g4 20 hxg4 ♘xg4 21 ♗f4 ♕f6 22 ♘e2 ♗e5 23 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 = O.Foisor-Suba, Romania 1984.

d3) 14...♘h5 15 ♘e2 (15 g3 ♗h3 16 ♖e1 ♗e5 17 ♕d1 ♘g7 18 ♗b5 ♖f8 =, preparing ...f5, Flear-Plaskett, Lewisham 1983) 15...♕f6!? (a rare but appealing move) 16 ♖a3 ♕g6 17 ♘g3 ♘f4 18 f3 ♗e5 19 ♔h1 ♕h6 and Black is quite OK, Barbero-Wesseln, Delmenhorst 1986.

We now return to the position after 13 ♖a3 *(D)*:

B



13...g4

This is ambitious, but by no means the only concept that Black can pursue. In many such positions, for example, Black plays more conservatively by ...h6, when f4 at some point results in the trade-off of Black's e5 outpost versus White's f-file. The following tries don't as yet commit Black to a specific structure:

a) 13...♔h8!? 14 ♘c4 (14 h3 g4) 14...♘fg4 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 f4 gxf4 17 ♗xf4 a6 (17...♖g8 looks more useful) 18 ♕d2 ♗f6 19 ♔h1 ♖b8 20 h3 (20 ♘d1 ♖g8 hopes for 21 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♖xf7 ♖xg2!, although here 21 ♘e3! would keep the advantage) 20...♘g6 21 ♗h6?! (Timoshenko prefers 21 ♗h2 ♕e7 22 ♘d1, when he calls 22...♗e5 23 ♖af3 "unclear"; maybe 22...♗d4, to keep ...♘e5 as an option?) 21...♖g8 22 ♘d1 ♘e5 23 ♘f2 ♗d7 24 ♗f4 ♕e7 ∓ Timoshenko-Lobron, Moscow 1989.

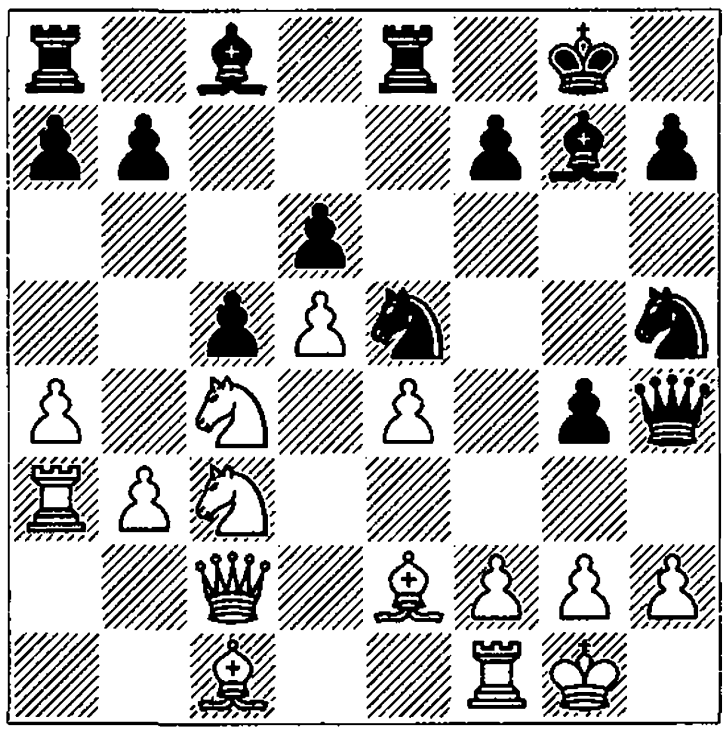
b) 13...♕e7 is a safe option, probably better than 13...♔h8: 14 a5 h6 (14...g4 15 f4 gxf3 16 ♘xf3 ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♘g4 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗f4 is "unclear" according to Gelfand; Black looks fine) 15 ♘d1?! (15 ♗b5 ♖f8 16 ♘d1 Gelfand) 15...♗d7 = Gelfand-J.Hall, Malmö 1999; Black plans ...♘g6 next.

14 ♘c4

Here we have the usual suspects:

a) 14 ♖e1 ♘h5 15 ♘f1 ♕f6 16 ♘d1 ♕g6 (this idea again, to enforce ...f5 and keep an eye on the e-pawn) 17 ♗b5 ♖f8 18 ♘de3 a6 19 ♗e2 ♘f3+! 20 gxf3 gxf3+ 21 ♘g3 ♘xg3 22 hxg3 fxe2 23 ♘f5 ♗xf5 24 exf5 ♕f6 (24...♕g4 25 ♖xe2 ♗d4 26 ♔g2 ♖fe8) 25 ♖b3 ♕e5 26 ♖xb7 ♖fe8 27 ♖b6 ♕xd5 28 ♖xe2 ♕f3 29 ♖e3 ♖xe3 30 ♗xe3, Zaltsman-Y.Grünfeld, Lone Pine 1981, and now 30...♗e5 is at least equal.

b) 14 b3 ♘h5 (14...a6 may also suffice: 15 a5 ♘h5 16 ♘c4 ♕f6 17 ♘d1? {17 ♘b6 ♖b8 18 ♘xc8 ♖bxc8 =} 17...♘f3+ 18 gxf3 gxf3 19 ♗xf3 ♕xf3 20 b4 ♕xe4 ∓ Vefling-Charushin, corr. 1985) 15 ♘c4 ♕h4! *(D)* and now:



b1) Not 16 ♘xd6? ♘f3+ 17 ♗xf3 (17 gxf3 ♗e5 18 f4 ♘xf4!) 17...gxf3 when 18 ♘xe8?? fails to 18...♕g4.

b2) 16 ♘b5 ♘xc4 17 bxc4 ♕e7 18 ♗d3 (here Schneider claims a positional advantage for White, but I doubt it, since the situation is very similar to what we've seen above) 18...♗e5 19 ♗b2 (19 f4? gxf3 20 ♖xf3 a6 21 ♘c3 ♗g4) 19...♗xb2! (instead of the complex 19...f6!? of A.Schneider-Bönsch, Budapest 1982) 20 ♕xb2 ♘f4 21 ♕d2! ♘g6 = 22 a5 (22 ♕h6 a6 23 ♘c3 ♕f8 =) 22...♔g7 23 ♘c3 ♘e5 24

♖b1 f5!, having in mind 25 exf5? ♘xd3 26 f6+ (not 26 ♕xd3? ♗xf5!) 26...♕xf6 27 ♕xd3 b5! ∓.

c) 14 ♘d1 ♘h5!? (safer is 14...♘g6 15 ♘e3 ♕e7 16 ♗b5 ♖f8 17 a5 ♖b8 18 ♖d1 h6 19 ♖b3 ♘h7, Averkin-Pigusov, Kazan 1985) 15 f4 (15 ♘e3 ♘f4 16 ♗d1 b6 = Antunac-Y.Grünfeld, New York 1979) 15...gxf3 16 ♘xf3 ♘g6 17 ♘g5 ♘f6 and now, instead of 18 ♖g3, as in Kouatly-Renet, Marseilles 1988, Schneider likes 18 ♖af3 h6 19 ♖3f2, but I see no major problem after 19...♘e5; e.g., 20 b3 a6 21 ♘h3 ♗xh3 22 gxh3 ♘h7 with the idea ...♘g5.

14...♘h5

After 14...♘xc4 15 ♗xc4, 15...♘d7! looks more natural than 15...♘h5 16 g3 ±, as has been tried in practice. Then after ...♘e5, the ideas of ...♕h4 and ...f5 are still available later.

15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 g3 ♘g7

Better may be 16...♗d7, and if White proceeds as in the game with 17 ♘d1, then Black can play (among others) 17...♕f6 18 f4 (18 ♘e3 ♕g6 19 ♘f5 ♗xf5 20 exf5 ♕g7 and ...♘f6) 18...gxf3 19 ♖axf3 ♕g6 with counterplay.

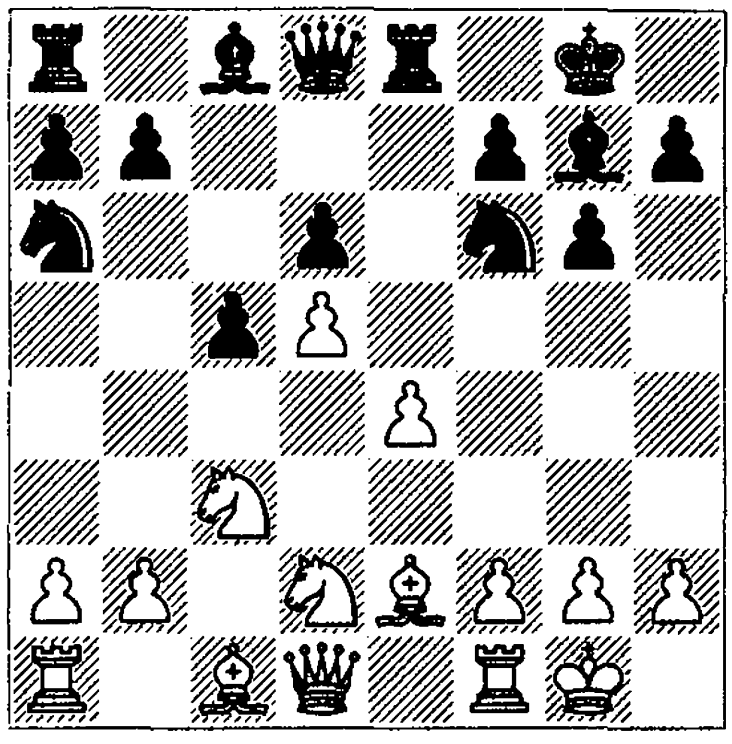
After the text-move (16...♘g7), Vilela-Vera, Havana 1987 continued 17 ♗d3 a6!? (17...♗d7!?) 18 ♘d1! ♗d7 19 a5 ♗b5 (19...b5 20 axb6 ♕xb6 21 ♘e3 ±) 20 ♘e3 ♕d7 21 ♘c4 ♗xc4 22 ♕xc4. This is probably somewhat better for White, but this whole line is not worrying in view of the multiple alternatives for Black along the way.

This concludes our look at 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 ♘bd7 in the Classical Main Line. I think it offers Black level play in an unbalanced position.

B)

7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♖e8 10 0-0 ♘a6 *(D)*

W



This introduces a totally different scheme than we saw with 10...♘bd7 (Line A). Black's initial idea is very simple. He will play ...♘c7, discouraging an e5 break by White because the pawn on d5 will hang. The knight on c7 also helps to support ...b5, usually prefaced by ...a6. If White plays a4-a5, this knight frequently exercises the option of moving to b5 and from there to d4.

You will find this to be an unpretentious system, which offers Black a clear plan and reliable play without creating the weaknesses of Line A above. On the other hand, he tends to get fewer winning chances, since both sides' play is generally less dynamic.

11 f3

The most common move. Unlike the ...♘bd7 system of the last section, the

alternatives to the popular main line aren't as serious (i.e., equal in value to it):

a) 11 ♗xa6 is hardly ever effective in the Benoni, since Black gets two bishops and strong b-file pressure; for example, 11...bxa6 12 ♖e1 ♗d7 (or 12...♘g4 13 h3 ♘e5 14 ♕e2? f5! 15 b3 f4! 16 ♗b2 g5 with an attack, Kholmov-Sandarov, Riga 1954) 13 a4 ♘g4 14 h3 ♘e5 15 ♘f1 ♖b8 with an equal position, Kaestner-Neumann, Wiesbaden 1992.

b) 11 f4 transposes to a slightly unusual variation of the Four Pawns Attack, the main line going 11...♘c7 12 a4 (12 ♗f3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 b5 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 e5 ♕b6 16 exf6 ♗xf6 ∓) 12...b6 (12...a6 is also supposed to lead to equality, according to *ECO*) 13 ♔h1 (13 ♖e1 ♖b8 14 ♗f3 ♗a6 =) 13...♗a6 14 ♖e1 (14 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 intending ...♘b4) 14...♗xe2 15 ♖xe2 ♘g4 16 h3, Savon-Beliavsky, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1973, and now 16...♗d4! looks best; e.g., 17 ♕e1 ♘f6 18 ♘c4 (18 ♘f3 ♕e7 19 e5 ♗xc3) 18...♕e7 (18...♕d7 =) 19 e5? dxe5 20 d6 ♕e6 21 fxe5 ♕xc4 22 dxc7 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♘d5 ∓.

c) 11 a4 ♘b4 12 ♖e1 (12 f3 ♘d7 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 =) 12...b6 13 ♖a3 ♕e7 14 ♘c4 ♗a6 15 ♗f1 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 = Temirbaev-Ruban, Uzhgorod 1988.

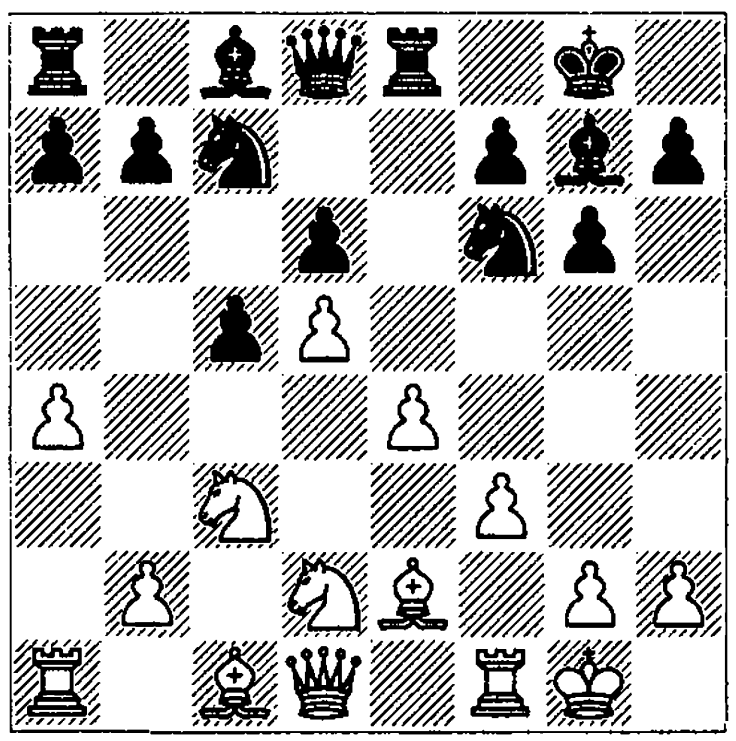
d) 11 ♔h1 ♘c7 12 a4 ♖b8 13 f3 a6!? (13...b6 transposes to note 'a2' to White's 13th move) 14 ♘c4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♘a5 ♗d7 17 ♘c6 ♗xc6 18 dxc6 b4 19 ♘d5? (19 ♘a4 ♘e6! =) 19...♘fxd5 20 exd5 ♘xd5 21 ♕xd5 ♖xe2 and Black had the better of the complications in Shneider-Agzamov, Telavi 1982.

e) 11 ♖e1 (a fairly frequent move, but ineffective at this point for several reasons) 11...♘c7 (11...♖b8 has also been successful here) 12 a4 a6 (less demanding than the popular and also satisfactory 12...b6) 13 ♕c2 (13 ♖b1!? ♖b8 14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♘d7 16 ♕c2 ♘c5 =) 13...♖b8 14 a5 ♗d7 15 ♘c4 ♘b5 16 ♗g5 ♘d4 17 ♕d1 ♗b5 is level, Makogonov-Antoshin, Baku 1959.

11...♘c7 12 a4 *(D)*

After 12 ♕c2 Boleslavsky recommends 12...b5, continuing 13 ♘xb5 ♘fxd5 =, but 13 ♗xb5! ♘xb5 14 ♘xb5 is good for White in view of 14...♗a6 15 ♕a4 ♕b6 16 ♘c7!. So Black should play something sensible like 12...♖b8, or try 12...♘fxd5!? 13 exd5 ♗xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♖xe2 15 ♘e4 ♘b5! 16 ♕d3 ♘d4 17 ♗e3 ♖xb2 18 ♗xd4 cxd4 19 ♕xd4 ♕b6, which is probably about equal.

B



12...b6

Or:

a) 12...♘d7!? has done well over the board and the reader may prefer it, but I don't fully trust the line 13 ♘c4 (for 13 ♔h1 b6, see note 'a1' to White's 13th move; 13 f4 is considered equal after 13...♘f6, but simpler may be 13...f5!? 14 exf5 gxf5 15 ♘f3 ♘f6 16 ♗d3 ♘g4 17 h3 ♘e3 18 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 = Baburin-de Firmian, Farum 1993) 13...♘e5 14 ♘e3 f5 15 exf5! (15 f4?! ♘f7 16 exf5 ♘h6!! 17 fxg6? ♗d4 18 gxh7+ ♔h8 19 ♖f3 ♘g4 20 ♕d3 ♕h4 21 h3 ♘xe3, Toth-Matulović, Hungary 1972, and now the critical continuation 22 ♗xe3 is refuted by 22...♖xe3 23 ♖xe3 ♕xf4 24 ♘d1 ♘xd5) 15...gxf5 16 f4 ♘f7 (16...♘g6 has also been played, but 17 ♔h1 prepares to pressure the f-pawn) 17 ♔h1! (17 ♗d3 ♗d4!? 18 ♖f3 ♕f6 19 ♔h1 ♗d7 20 ♗d2 ♘h6 21 ♕c2 ♖e7 = is *ECO*'s main line) 17...♕f6 18 ♗d3 ♗d7 19 ♕c2 ♘h6 20 ♗d2 ♖f8 21 ♖f3!, Hesselbach-Mueller, corr. 1981. White must be at least somewhat better due to the weak f5-pawn.

b) It's curious that 12...a6!? is never even mentioned, presumably because 13 ♘c4 ♖b8 14 ♗f4 ♗f8 looks so bad. But it seems to me that White has to play quite accurately to maintain an edge, probably by 15 a5 (15 ♕d2 b5 16 ♘a5 ♗d7 is not clear) 15...♘b5 (15...♘h5!? 16 ♗e3 ♗d7 merits consideration) 16 ♘xb5 axb5 17 ♘b6 (17 ♘a3!?) 17...♗d7 (17...♘h5 18 ♗e3 ♗d7) 18 ♕d2, intending to answer 18...♘h5 with 19 ♗g5, and thinking about a timely b4.

13 ♘c4

Alternatives look too slow; e.g.:

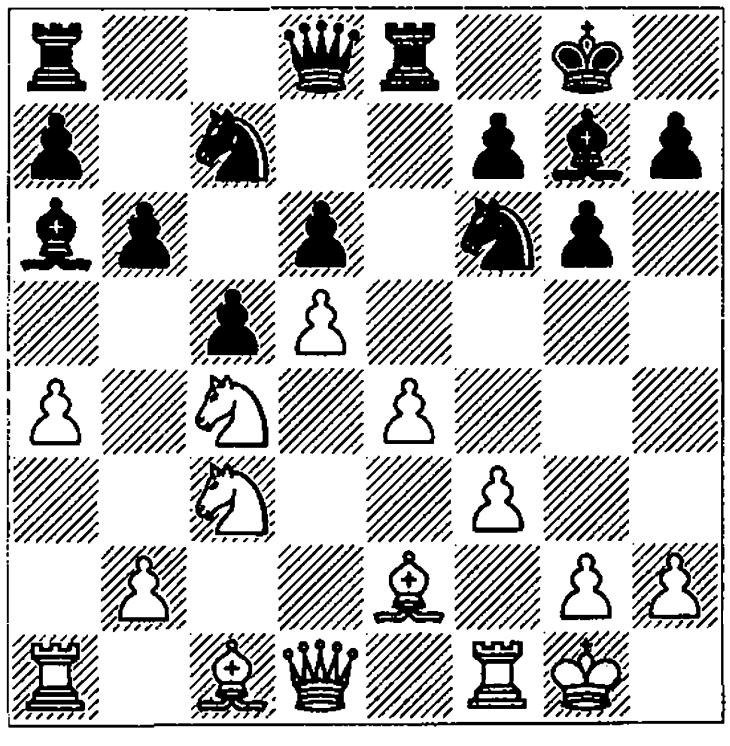
a) 13 ♔h1 and now:

a1) 13...♘d7!? 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♘e3 ♖b8 16 ♗d2 a6 17 f4 ♘d7 18 ♘c4 ♘f6 19 ♗f3 b5 20 ♘xd6! ♕xd6 21 e5, Dijksta-Alexander, corr. 1976, and now 21...♕d8! is Geller's suggestion; nevertheless, this may still be a bit better for White after 22 d6 ♘e6 23 exf6 ♗xf6 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♗c6.

a2) 13...♖b8 (the easiest path) and now 14 ♘c4 ♗a6 transposes to note 'f' to White's 14th move. Instead, 14 ♗b5 ♖f8 15 ♗c6 a6 16 ♖b1 b5 17 b4 c4 18 ♗b2 ♗d7 19 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 = was Øgaard-Tisdall, Norwegian Ch (Kristiansand) 1987.

b) 13 ♖b1 ♘h5! 14 f4? ♘f6 (Black should prefer 14...♗d4+! 15 ♔h1 ♘f6 ∓) 15 h3 ♖b8 16 ♗d3 a6 17 ♕c2 b5 18 b3 ♘h5! 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♗b2 f5!, Gulko-Emms, Esbjerg 2000. If 21 exf5 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h2, then 22...♕h4 ∓ with the idea 23 fxg6? ♗xh3!.

13...♗a6 *(D)*



Black's plan is to eliminate the powerful c4-knight, and then expand with moves like ...a6, ...♕d7 and ...b5.

14 ♗g5

There are more games with this than all other moves combined. For example, it gets 11 pages in Schneider and everything else gets about a page and a half. Nevertheless, a couple of White's alternatives deserve better:

a) Not 14 ♘a3? due to 14...♘fxd5! 15 ♗xa6 ♘xc3 16 ♕d3 ♘xa4 – Janošević.

b) 14 ♘e3 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 a6 16 g4!? ♖b8 17 g5 ♘h5 18 ♘g4 b5 19 ♕g2 ♕d7 20 ♔h1?! bxa4! ∓ (open lines) Karasev-Stein, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971.

c) 14 ♗e3 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♖e1 ♘d7 17 ♗f1 ♖b8 18 ♕c2 b5 with equality, Partos-Matulović, Bucharest 1966.

d) 14 ♗d2 ♕d7!? 15 ♘e3 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 a6 17 ♖abl b5 18 b3 ♘h5 = 19 g3 f5 20 exf5? ♖xe3! V.Danielsen-Filipowicz, Roskilde 1978.

e) 14 ♖bl gets off the long diagonal and prepares b4: 14...♗xc4!? (interesting but unnecessary; 14...♕d7 is the standard method, when 15 b4 can be met by 15...♘h5 16 ♗d2, and then 16...f5 or 16...cxb4 17 ♖xb4 f5) 15 ♗xc4 ♘d7!? 16 ♘b5! ♘xb5 17 axb5. Stohl thinks that White has a clear advantage here, but Black has certain resources; e.g., 17...♘e5!? (maybe 17...♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 ♕h4!? is a better choice, since on d4 the bishop exerts a lot of influence) 18 ♗e2 g5 19 ♗e3 (19 ♕d2 h6 20 f4 ♘g6) 19...♘g6 20 ♕d2 h6 21 ♖a1 ♖f8 (considering ...f5) 22 ♗d3 ♕d7 23 ♖fc1 ♘e5 24 ♗f1 f5. White may have something, but his advantage is not obvious.

f) 14 ♔h1 is particularly noteworthy, as it can arise from other move-orders: 14...♖b8 15 ♗g5!? (again this move; instead, 15 ♖b1 {to enforce b4} 15...♕d7 16 b4 is probably best met by 16...♘h5! =, but 16...cxb4 17 ♖xb4 ♘h5 18 ♘b5 ♗xb5 19 axb5 f5! 20 ♘e3 fxe4 21 fxe4 ♘f6 isn't bad for Black either because of White's backward e-pawn, Zhidkov-Agzamov, Cheliabinsk 1981) and now:

f1) 15...h6 is the conservative line: 16 ♗e3 ♕e7 (Kapengut; another idea is 16...♔h7 17 ♕d2 ♕d7!?) 17 ♕d2 ♔h7?! (better is 17...♗xc4 18 ♗xc4 ♔h7) 18 ♖ael (not dangerous; nor is 18 b3 ♘d7 19 ♖ac1 f5 20 ♗f4 ♗xc4 21 bxc4 g5, but Se.Ivanov's 18 e5 ♗xc4 19 exd6 ♕xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 21 dxc7 ♖c8 22 ♗xc4 ♖xc7 23 ♖ael ± might lead one to prefer the 16th- or 17th-move options I've indicated; still, what follows is instructive) 18...♘d7 19 ♗f2 ♗xc4 20 ♗xc4 a6 21 ♕e2 b5! 22 axb5 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 axb5 24 ♗a2 is "unclear" according to Kapengut. I think Black is fine here; e.g., 24...♖a8 25 ♕c2 ♖a3 and ...♖ea8.

f2) 15...♕d7 and now:

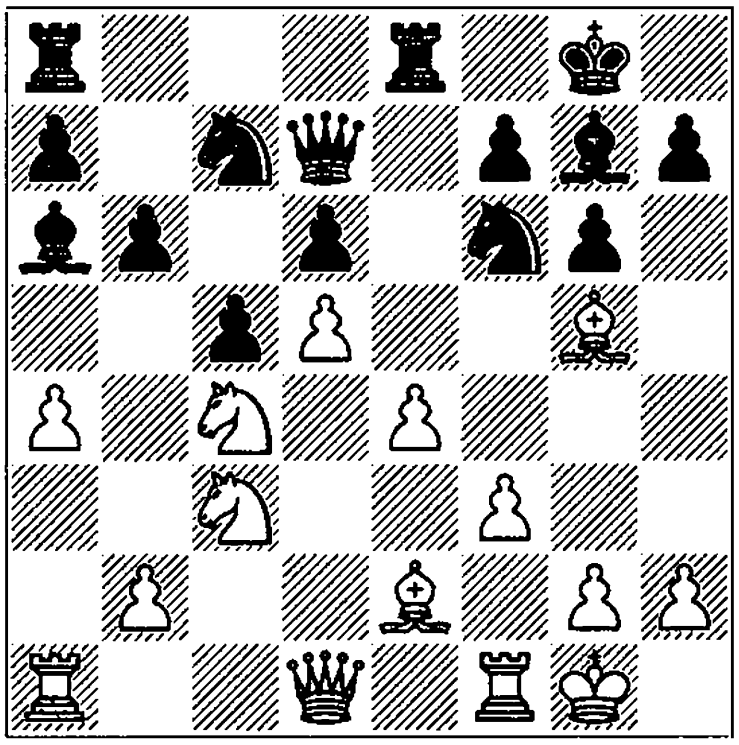
f21) Interesting is 16 ♖b1 ♗xc4 17 ♗xc4 a6 18 b4 b5 19 ♗d3 (19 axb5 ♘xb5!) 19...c4 20 ♗c2 bxa4! 21 ♗xa4 ♘b5 with counterplay, Kojder-Rogulj, Lodz 1980.

f22) The most critical line is 16 b3, so that ...♗xc4 can be answered by bxc4. Then 16...♘h5 17 ♖c1 f6 18 ♗d2!? (18 ♗e3 f5 19 g4 ♗xc4 20 bxc4 fxg4 21 fxg4 ♘f6 = Portisch-Nunn, London 1982) 18...f5! 19 exf5 gxf5 20 ♖e1 occurred in the game

Ivanchuk-Wahls, Adelaide jr Wch 1988. Black has excellent activity and White's d-pawn is very weak. Instead of the Wahls's strange 20...f4?!, I think that 20...♗b7! is more pointed, especially with ...♘f6 coming.

14...♕d7 *(D)*

There is a huge body of theory on 14...h6 15 ♗e3, but I can't find a truly reliable equalizer for Black, nor against 15 ♗h4, for that matter. The text-move unpins the knight, and saves a tempo in comparison with lines where the h6-pawn is attacked by a bishop on e3 and a queen on d2.



W

15 ♕d2

The principal move these days. We have already seen 15 ♔h1 ♖ab8 (it transposes to note 'f2' to White's 14th move). White's other moves resemble earlier attempts:

a) 15 ♖e1 h6 16 ♗h4!? ♘h5 17 ♕d2 ♗xc4 18 ♗xc4 a6 19 g4!? b5 20 ♗f1 ♘f6 = 21 ♗xf6? ♗xf6 22 ♕xh6 b4 23 ♘d1 ♘xd5 24 ♖c1? ♕e7! ∓ Gyimesi-Shliperman, Guarapuava U-18 Wch 1995.

b) 15 ♖a3 ♖ab8 16 ♖b3 ♖b7!? (more efficient is simply 16...h6 17 ♗d2 ♔h7 18 ♔h1 ♖e7 = Baragar-Findlay, Canadian Ch (Ottawa) 1984) 17 ♘b5 ♗xb5 18 axb5 ♖a8 19 ♗f4 ♘fe8 20 ♘e3 ♖bb8 21 ♕a1 a6! 22 bxa6 b5 23 ♖a3 (23 a7 ♖b7 24 ♖a3 ♘f6 25 ♕a2 ♘ce8 26 ♖a1 ♘h5 27 ♗g5 ♗d4 28 ♔h1 c4 29 ♘c2 ♗c5 30 b4 ♗b6 =) 23...♖a7 = with the idea ...♖b6 and ...♖bxa6, O.Foisor-Lejeune, Wattignies U-16 Wch 1976.

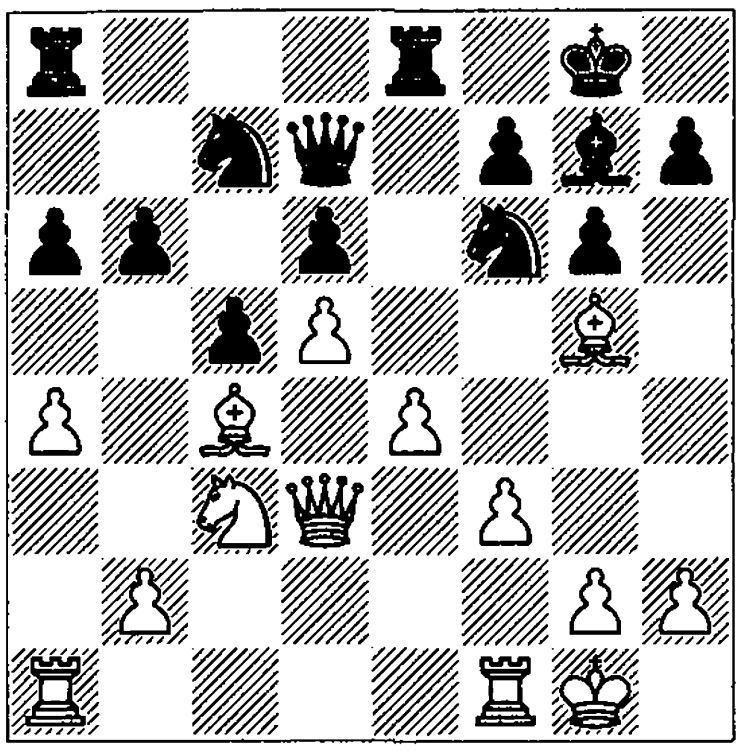
c) 15 ♖b1 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 17 b4 b5 18 ♗d3 c4!? 19 ♗c2 bxa4! (a theme to remember: if you don't get the a-file after axb5 and ...axb5, then you can often play ...bxa4 and win the b5-square) 20 ♗xa4 ♘b5 with good play for Black, Beliavsky-Portisch, Szirak IZ 1987.

15...♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 17 ♕d3 *(D)*

A logical move, stopping ...b5. The old main line was 17 ♖fe1 b5 18 ♗f1 bxa4 (18...h5!? planning ...♘h7 has also been played; then Schneider gives 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♕f4 ♘h7 21 ♗h6 as ±, but 21...♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 b4 23 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 must be OK for Black) 19 ♖xa4 (19 ♘xa4 ♖eb8 =) 19...♘fxd5! 20 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 22 ♗xa6 ♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 ♘c7 24 ♗c4 d5 25 exd5 ♖xe1+ 26 ♕xe1 ♘xd5 =. This is analysis by Kapengut who, however, continues 27 ♕e4(?) ♘b6 =. Schneider points out 27...♕a4!, winning at least a pawn.

After the text-move (17 ♕d3), White has two bishops and a fragile grip on Black's queenside. His main problem now is that he's so committed to stopping ...b5 that Black has time to

B



play around on the other side of the board. Then, too, White's most logical idea, ♖b1 and b4, often seems to activate Black's pieces as much as White's. It's possible that White has a very small theoretical edge, but even that is not clear.

17...♘h5

Black wants to activate his kingside pieces, perhaps by ...♗e5 and ...♘f4, while watching for an opportunity for ...f5.

17...♕c8!? has also been played, intending ...♖ab8, ...♕b7 and ...b5. That looks artificial, but isn't so easy to meet and should definitely be considered. 18 ♗f4! ♗f8 19 ♖ab1 ♘d7 and now:

a) Ruban-Filippov, Kemerovo 1995 continued 20 b4 ('?!' Stohl) 20...cxb4 21 ♖xb4 ♘e5! 22 ♗xe5!? (not, of course, 22 ♕d2?? a5, but Stohl gives lengthy analysis of 22 ♕e2 b5! 23 axb5 axb5! with good play for Black) 22...dxe5 23 ♖b2 (23 d6 ♘e6! = intending ...♕c5 and ...♘f4), and now easiest was 23...♗c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♕d7!? = with the idea ...♕d6, ...♖f8 and ...f5.

b) Thus Stohl prefers 20 ♕d2 for White: 20...♖b8 21 b4 b5 22 axb5!? (22 ♗e2 bxa4!? 23 bxc5 ♘xc5 24 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 25 ♖b1 ♕a7 =) 22...axb5 (in fact 22...♘xb5 is not bad either; e.g., 23 ♗xb5 axb5 24 bxc5 ♕xc5+ 25 ♗e3 ♗h6 26 f4 ♕c4 ∓, due to White's central weakness) 23 ♗e2 c4 24 ♗e3 "with the initiative and the centre", but this is an instructive misassessment, in my opinion, because the a-file is a key factor here and White's e2-bishop is doing as little as Black's knight on c7. In the absence of Black's light-squared bishop, these positions are generally OK. There might follow 24...♗g7 25 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 26 ♕xd4 ♖a8 27 ♖a1 ♕b7 (intending ...♖xa1 and ...♖a8) 28 f4!? ♖xa1 29 ♖xa1 ♖a8 with a good game; e.g., 30 ♖e1 ♖a3 31 ♗f3 ♕b6 32 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 33 ♖c1 f6! ∓. These lines are characteristic of White's b4 plan in a favourable environment; even in that case, Black will normally achieve good counterplay.

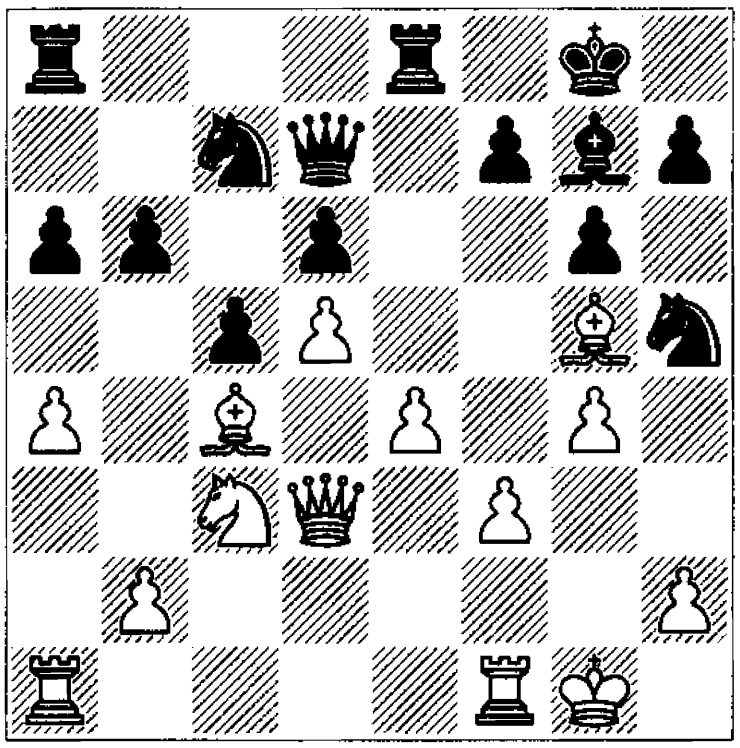
18 g4 *(D)*

After 18 ♔h1, instead of 18...♗d4?! 19 b4! ± Ionov-Scherbakov, Russian Ch (St Petersburg) 1998, Scherbakov recommends 18...♗e5 as "unclear". Then 19 f4 ♗g7 (19...♗xc3 20 bxc3 b5 is messy) 20 ♖ae1 h6 21 ♗h4 ♘xf4! 22 ♖xf4 g5 23 ♗xg5 hxg5 looks fine for Black. I should mention that 18...h6 also makes more sense in this case than on move 14.

18...♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♘g7

We see this manoeuvre in quite a few Benonis. The knight is itself very poorly placed, but supports the pawn-breaks ...h5 and ...f5.

B



20 ♖ab1 h5! 21 ♘e2

21 h3!? is unmentioned; then play might go 21...hxg4 22 hxg4 f6 23 ♗h6 ♗e5, contemplating moves like ...♘h5 or ...f5, depending upon the play; for example, 24 ♔g2 f5 25 exf5 (25 gxf5 gxf5 26 exf5 ♘xf5 =) 25...gxf5 26 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 27 ♖h1! ♖ab8! =, with ...b5 coming, even after captures on f5.

21...b5 22 ♗a2

Here Dlugy-de Firmian, USA Ch (Berkeley) 1988 went 22...♗e5? 23 f4 c4 24 ♕g3! ±. Instead, Dlugy offers 22...hxg4 23 ♘xd4 cxd4 24 f4! "with compensation" (24 ♕xd4 can be met by 24...♘h5!? or 24...bxa4 =). Play might then continue 24...bxa4 (Dlugy gives 24...g3 25 f5!, but even this is not clear after 25...gxh2, intending ...bxa4) 25 ♕xd4 f5!? with the idea 26 e5 dxe5 27 fxe5 ♘ce6. This is certainly messy enough for both sides, but I think that Black is fully equal.

The Classical Main Line is not the threat that it used to be. Reasonably secure answers have been found, and White's attempts to restrict his opponent's position don't seem to have the staying power that, for example, most variations of the Modern Main Line do. In the ...♘bd7-e5 and ...g5 lines (A), Black's piece dance on the dark squares nullifies White's attempt to exploit the kingside weaknesses, and a kind of sustained equilibrium results. In the ...♘a6-c7 and ...b6 lines (B), White has to devote so many forces to the prevention of ...b5 that it's hard for him to achieve anything positive or deal with Black on the other side of the board. If White does manage to keep a theoretical edge in one or another of these lines, it tends to be a very small advantage indeed.

Index of Variations

Chapter Guide

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 c5
3 d5 e6
4 ♘c3

Other 4th moves – Chapter 1

4 ... exd5
5 cxd5

Other 5th moves – Chapter 1

5 ... d6

Now:

A: 6 ♘f3
B: 6 e4

Or:
6 h3 – Chapter 1
6 ♗f4 – Chapter 2
6 g3 – Chapter 6

A)

6 ♘f3 g6
7 e4

7 ♕a4+ and 7 ♗f4 – Chapter 2
7 ♗g5 – Chapter 3
7 ♘d2 – Chapter 4 (with 8 e4 and 9 ♗e2 – Chapter 10)
7 g3 – Chapter 6
7 h3 – Chapter 9

7 ... ♗g7

7...a6 8 a4 (other moves – Chapter 9)
8...♗g4 – Chapter 9

8 ♗e2

8 ♗g5 – Chapter 3
8 ♕a4+, 8 ♗b5+, 8 ♗d3 and 8 h3 – Chapter 9
8 ♘d2 – Chapter 10

8 ... 0-0

Now:
9 ♗g5 – Chapter 3
9 0-0 – Chapter 10

B)

6 e4 g6
7 f4

7 ♘f3 – see Line A above
7 g3 and 7 ♗b5+ – Chapter 1
7 ♗f4 – Chapter 2
7 ♗g5 – Chapter 3
7 ♘ge2 – Chapter 7
7 f3 – Chapter 8
7 h3 – Chapter 9
7 ♗e2 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 – Chapter 10 (other 8th moves – Chapter 1)
7 ♗d3 – Chapter 7 (7...♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♘f3 – Chapter 9)

7 ... ♗g7

7...♕e7 – Chapter 5

8 ♗b5+

8 e5 and 8 ♘f3 – Chapter 5

8 ... ♘fd7

– Chapter 5

1: Introduction and Early Moves
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 *14*
A: **4 dxe6** *15*
B: **4 g3** *16*
C: **4 ♘f3** *17*

C1: 4...exd5 *17* 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 *17*
C2: 4...d6 *18*
D: **4 ♘c3** *19* **4...exd5** *19*
D1: 5 ♘xd5 *19*
D2: 5 cxd5 *20* 5...d6 6 e4 (6 h3 *20*) 6...g6 (irregular continuations and transpositions) *20*

2: Systems with ♗f4

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
A: **6 ♗f4** *22*
B: **6 ♘f3 g6**
B1: **7 ♕a4+!?** *24*
B2: **7 ♗f4** *26*
B21: **7...a6** *27*
B211: 8 ♘d2 *27*
B212: 8 a4 *28*
B213: 8 e4 *30*
B22: **7...♗g7** *33* 8 ♕a4+ (8 e3 *34*; 8 h3 *34*; 8 ♘d2 *34*) 8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 *34*
C: **6 e4 g6 7 ♗f4** *37* 7...♗g7 8 ♕a4+ (8 ♗b5+ *37*) 8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7 10 ♘f3 *38*

3: Systems with ♗g5

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
A: **6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗g5** *44* **7...h6 8 ♗h4** *44*
A1: **8...g5** *45* **9 ♗g3 ♘h5 10 e3** (10 ♕a4+ *45*; 10 ♘d2 *45*) **10...♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♗g7** *46*
A11: 12 ♘d2 *46*
A12: 12 ♗d3 *47*
A2: **8...♗g7** *49* 9 e3 (9 ♘d2 *49*) 9...0-0 *49*
B: **6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3** (7 ♗g5 *50*) **7...♗g7 8 ♗g5** *51*
C: **6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗g5** *54* 9...h6 *54* 10 ♗h4 g5 11 ♗g3 *55* 11...♘h5 12 ♘d2 *55*

4: The Knight's Tour Variation

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2** *59*
A: **7...♘bd7** *59* **8 e4** (8 ♘c4 *60*) **8...♗g7 9 ♘c4** *61* (9 ♗d3 *61*; 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8 *189*) 9...♘b6 *61* (9...♕e7 *61*) 10 ♘e3 *62*
B: **7...♗g7** *64* **8 ♘c4** (8 e4 *186*) **8...0-0** *64*
B1: **9 ♗f4** *65* (9 g3 *65*) 9...♘e8 *65*
B2: **9 ♗g5** *67*
B21: 9...♕d7!? *68* (9...♘a6 *68*)
B22: 9...♕e7 *70*

5: Pawn-Storm Systems

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 e4 g6 7 f4** *72*
A: **7...♗g7** *72*
A1: **8 e5** *72*
A2: **8 ♘f3** *75* **8...0-0 9 ♗e2** *75*
A21: 9...♗g4 *76* (9...♘a6 *75*)
A22: 9...♘bd7 *79*
A3: **8 ♗b5+** *82* **8...♘fd7** *84*
A31: **9 ♘f3** *84*
A32: **9 ♗e2** *86*
A33: **9 ♗d3** *87* 9...♕h4+!? 10 g3 *88* 10...♕e7 11 ♘f3 *89* 11...0-0 12 0-0 ♘b6 *89*
A34: **9 a4** *92* **9...♕h4+** (9...a6 *93*) **10 g3** *95* (10 ♔f1 *95*)
A341: **10...♕d8** *96* **11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0** (12 h3 *96*) **12...a6** *96*
A3411: 13 ♗c4 *97*
A3412: 13 ♗e2 *98*
A3413: 13 ♗d3 *100*
A342: **10...♕e7** *101* **11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 a6** *102*
A3421: 13 ♗c4 *103*
A3422: 13 ♗e2 *103*
A3423: 13 ♗d3 *105*
B: **7...♕e7** *106*

6: Fianchetto Systems with g3
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 ♘f3** (6 g3 *110*) **6...g6 7 g3** *110* **7...♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0** *110* (9 ♘d2 *111*)
A: **9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7** *112*
A1: **11 e4** *113*
A2: **11 ♗f4** *114*
A3: **11 ♘d2** *115*
A31: **11...♖e8** *115*
A311: 12 ♘c4 *117*
A312: 12 h3 *118*
A32: **11...♘h5** *123*
B: **Lines with ...♖e8** *124*
B1: 9...♖e8 *124*
B2: 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 *127*

7: Systems with ♗d3 and ♘ge2
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3** *130* (7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 8 ♘g3 *130*) **7...♗g7** (7...a6 *132*) **8 ♘ge2** *132* (8 h3 *132*) **8...0-0** *132* **9 0-0** *132*
A: **9...a6** *134* (9...♖e8 *134*; 9...♘bd7 *135*) **10 a4 ♘bd7 11 h3 ♕c7 12 ♘g3 ♖e8 13 f4!? c4 14 ♗c2 ♖b8 15 ♗e3 ♘c5** *137*
A1: 16 ♕f3 *138*
A2: 16 ♗d4 *140*
B: **9...♘g4** *142*

8: Kapengut's 7 f3 System
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 e4 g6 7 f3** *147* **7...♗g7** *147*
A: **8 ♗d3** *148*
B: **8 ♘ge2** *150*
C: **8 ♗e3** *152* **8...0-0** *152*
C1: 9 ♘ge2 *153*
C2: 9 ♕d2 *154*
D: **8 ♗g5** *155*

9: Modern Main Line
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 ♘f3 g6**
A: **7 h3** *157* 7...a6 8 a4 ♕e7 *157*
B: **7 e4** *161*
B1: **7...a6** *161* (7...♗g4? *161*)
B11: **8 a4** *162* **8...♗g4** *162*
B111: 9 h3 *162*
B112: 9 ♗e2 *164*
B113: 9 ♕b3 *168*
B12: **8 h3** *171* 8...b5 9 ♗d3 ♗g7 10 0-0 *171*
B2: **7...♗g7** *176* **8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3** *177* **9...♘h5!? 10 0-0 ♘d7** *179*
B21: 11 ♗g5 *179*
B22: 11 ♗e3 *182*
B23: 11 ♖e1 *183*

10: Classical Main Line
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 **6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4** *186* (7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 *186*) **7...♗g7** (7...a6 *186*) **8 ♗e2** *186* (8 ♘d2 *186*) **8...0-0 9 0-0** *186* **9...♖e8!?** (9...a6! 10 a4 ♗g4! *187*) **10 ♘d2** *188* (10 ♕c2 *188*)
A: **10...♘bd7** *189*
A1: 11 h3 *190*
A2: 11 a4 *194*
B: **10...♘a6** *199* 11 f3 *199*

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